THE HALCYON

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE THOMAS FISHER RARE BOOK LIBRARY

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Collecting for the Future

The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library has long been a vibrant part of the research, teaching, and cultural life at the University of Toronto and in the city of Toronto. As one of North America's leading special collections libraries, the Fisher Library preserves and makes accessible materials that document the richness and diversity of human thought and expression. Special collections offer something unique: they not only safeguard rare and distinctive materials, but also create opportunities for hands-on learning, new discoveries, and meaningful public engagement, experiences that cannot be replicated through digital or circulating collections alone.

This issue of *The Halcyon* highlights recent acquisitions and the principles that shape how we collect today. Building a collection is not just about acquiring rare items; it is about broadening representation, addressing historical gaps, and reflecting a wider range of voices, communities, and experiences. By diversifying our holdings across geographies, languages, and lived experiences, we help ensure that the library remains relevant to today's scholars while offering future generations a richer, more inclusive record of the past.

These acquisitions are made possible through the generosity and care of donors and the Friends of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, whose support allows us not only to acquire important materials, but also to catalogue, preserve, and share them widely. We are especially grateful to the donors whose generosity sustains this work, to the booksellers whose expertise helps bring remarkable materials to light, to the communities who entrust us with their stories and heritage, and to the library staff whose dedication makes these collections discoverable and meaningful. Their combined efforts ensure that these collections are not 'hidden treasures', but active resources integrated into teaching, exhibitions, and ongoing scholarship. In this way, collecting becomes more than preservation; it is a shared effort to care for and connect the intellectual and cultural conversations of the past and present.

Loryl MacDonald
Associate Chief Librarian for
Special Collections and Director,
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

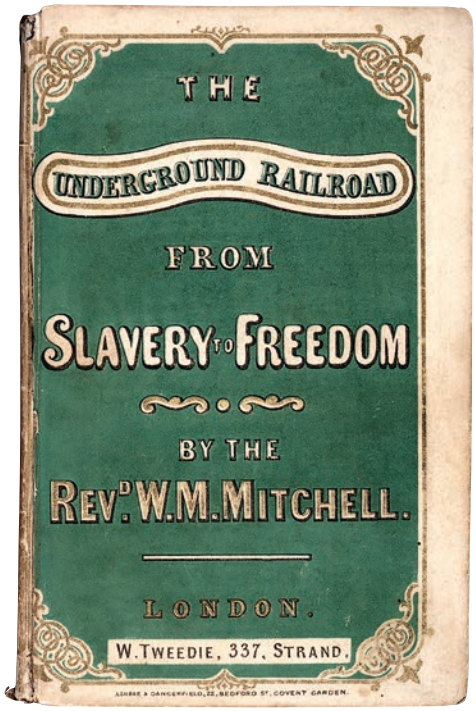
COVER: Binding by Robert Wu for a copy of François L. Schmied's *Ruth et Booz,* Paris : F. L. Schmied, 1930. Article on page 24.

‘The Mysterious Road’: Three Accounts of the Underground Railroad, 1860–1879

Recently, the Fisher Library acquired three books that document first-hand experiences of the Underground Railroad, all published either before or just after the formal end of slavery in the United States in 1865. These books are not only valuable primary sources, but also—despite its clandestine operations—are a part of the Underground Railroad’s remarkably rich print culture. The story of the Underground Railroad is as much Canadian as it is American, as an estimated thirty-five thousand freedom seekers fled to Canada with the assistance of this decentralized, informal network of activists. This was especially so during the Railroad’s height from 1850 to 1865 after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which meant that the security of those who had fled to ‘free’ states in the North was no longer guaranteed. Employing the terminology of the railroad, then one of the primary technologies of North American life, safe houses were called ‘stations’, the owners of safe houses ‘stationmasters’, and the brave people who conveyed escapees towards freedom in Canada ‘conductors’. The three books profiled here were each written and compiled by Railroad conductors: Reverend William M. Mitchell (c.1826–c.1879) and William Still (1821–1902), both African American, and Eber M. Pettit (1802–1885).

The earliest title is a second edition of Mitchell’s *The Underground Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom* (1860), published in London by William Tweedie alongside co-publishers in Manchester and Edinburgh. Mitchell’s work is considered the first book to use ‘Underground Railroad’ in its title, notably while it was still in active operation. The library also holds a first edition published the same year by Tweedie, titled *The Under-Ground Railroad*. In contrast to the muted brown cloth and black title label of the first, the second edition is bound in jubilant green, white, and gold illustrated paper boards. It was issued as an equivalent to today’s paperback edition, with a different printer and a lower price, and includes excerpts from reviews of the first edition. The text has also been reset, and detailed analysis could reveal other changes made to the text between the two editions.

Mitchell was born in North Carolina to an Indigenous mother and a free Black father. Orphaned at a young age, he was indentured to a slaveholder, and during this time he was forced to participate in the brutalities of plantation life. After his indenture, he moved to Ohio in 1843, where he assisted with numerous escapes as a conductor and stationmaster. With the assistance of former slave and conductor John Mason, he recounts moving 265 people in a nineteen-month period alone. In 1855, Mitchell became a missionary for the American Baptist Free Mission Society and pastor at the Coloured Regular Baptist Church at Bay and Edward Streets in Toronto. In *The Underground Railroad*, he recounts his view of the origins of his title, stating that a slaveholder exclaimed ‘“The d—d Abolitionists must have a Rail-road under the ground.” … This Slaveholder at that time was, as the Slaveholders are at the present time, unable to locate this useful road; it therefore as much concealed from them as though it was literally under the ground.’[1] A fascinating section details the condition of the Black population in then-Canada West. In addition to recounting the successes of former slaves becoming skilled professionals and active farmers, he also discusses the racism they experienced after arriving in Canada, with complaints about increased competition for labour and the ‘nuisance’ of providing social assistance for newcomers, comments that ring as sadly familiar in response to recent refugee crises in Canada.[2] The book’s publication coincided with two fundraising tours of Britain that Mitchell undertook with Windsor-based minister William Troy (1827–1905) between 1859 and 1861 with the aim of building a school and church for their respective communities. As the Reverend W.H. Bonner comments in the preface, the ‘strength of prejudice against colour’ in Canada pushed them to fundraise in a more sympathetic Great Britain.[3] In addition to promoting the antislavery cause generally, Bonner notes that a portion of the profits of the book would go towards Mitchell’s fundraising efforts. However, Mitchell’s story came



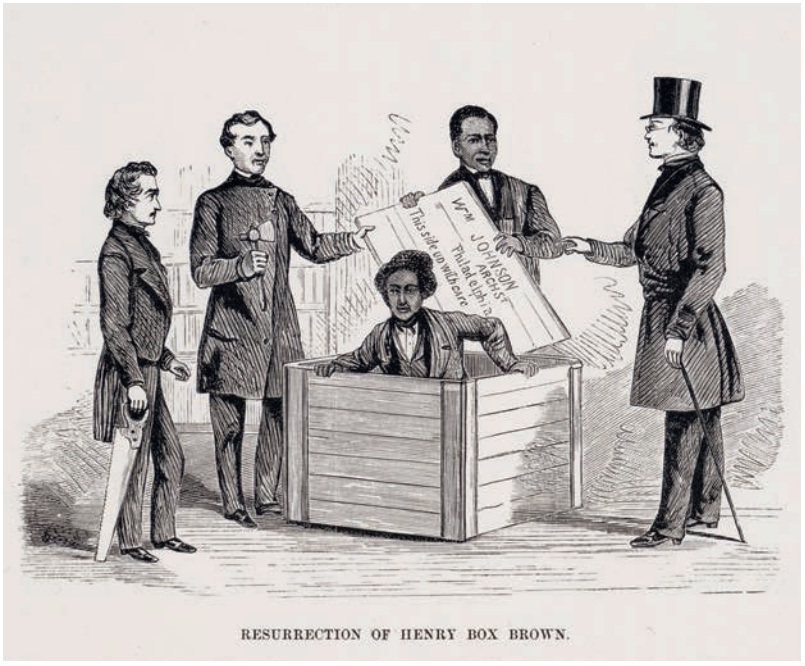
ABOVE: Cover of the second edition of *The Underground Railroad* (1860) by William Mitchell and his portrait as its frontispiece.

to an ignominious end following a final personal fundraising tour of 1863–1864 that ended in scandal for misuse of funds, possibly to help his ailing daughter, after which he disappears from the record.[4]

In contrast to the highly individual voice of Mitchell, William Still's 1872 volume *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c* contains multitudes. Published in Philadelphia by Porter & Coates, the book clocks in at 780 pages and contains countless narratives of escape alongside twenty-four plates and many other engravings interspersed with the text. Called the 'Father of the Underground Railroad' by *The New York Times* in his obituary, Still has been praised for centring the voices and ingenuity and bravery of the escapees themselves, understanding that the 'fugitive slaves themselves were the engine of the Underground Railroad' in the words of historian Andrew K. Diemer.[5] Still was born free in New Jersey, the youngest of eighteen children, to Levin and Charity Still, both of whom had been born into slavery. While he became a highly successful coal dealer, he remained committed to the cause of abolition and Black advancement throughout his life. In 1847, he began working as a clerk for the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and eventually served as chairman of its Vigilance Committee to aid freedom seekers as they travelled through the city. Through this work and secret activities as a conductor of the approximately eight hundred people he assisted via the Underground Railroad, he kept careful records of their stories as they passed through the Anti-Slavery Society offices. He also visited communities established by former slaves in Canada West in 1855 and became a lifelong correspondent and friend with the Canadian abolitionist Mary Ann Shadd (1823–1893), with his letters frequently appearing in her newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*. Still conceived the book as a record of experiences that deserved wider recognition, forming a 'counter-archive' to those of powerful slaveholders.[6] In his preface, he voices his hope that by publishing these stories, families could be reunited. But he also expresses 'great satisfaction' that the volume acts as a rich compendium of narratives, letters, and other sources that together 'all [have] a direct bearing on the mysterious road.'[7] A classroom favourite in the book is the story of Henry 'Box' Brown (c. 1815–1897), whose escape was undertaken by successfully mailing himself to the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society office via the Adams Express transport service in 1849. Brown would go on to become a sought-after performer and magician where he reenacted his escape on the stage time and again. It is less well known that he spent the last decade of his life in Toronto and died here in 1897. In 2024, a laneway in his Corktown neighbourhood was dedicated to him.

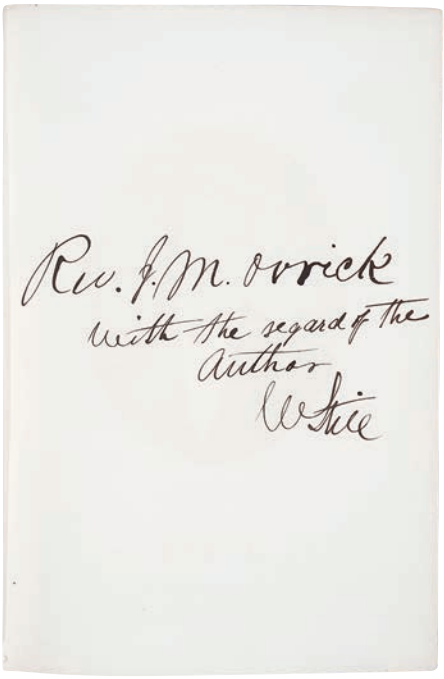
The recent acquisition adds a third copy of *The Underground Rail Road* to the library's collections. Both previous copies are quite fragile with loose pages and missing spines. Given the frequency with which this book is used in research and brought out for classes and events, it was prudent to add a more robust copy. But the three copies also have different bindings, which reflect the publishing history of the book. *The Underground Rail Road* was sold exclusively by subscription via a network of up to one hundred agents recruited by Still, one that operated not unlike the Underground Railroad itself.[8] Four binding options were available to subscribers at increasing prices. Two were cloth bindings in pebbled green and orange (other colours were also possibly available). The first had the abbreviation 'U.G.R.R.' stamped in gold on the front, followed by a 'deluxe' panelled cloth binding with a more ornate gold title design. This second cloth design resembles that of a family bible, which aligns with Still's vision that his book be a 'monument' that '[e]very family—colored especially, ought to have … upon its table.'[9] Two leather bindings (sheep leather, 'library style' and 'half Turkey' Morocco leather) were also available. The newest addition is an example of the panelled style in orange cloth, while a previous copy is in the green panelled style. The library's other heavily worn copy may be an example of the sheep leather binding.[10] But most impressive is that the recently acquired volume is a presentation copy, signed by William Still himself, to the Reverend John Muir Orrock (1829–1909), an abolitionist clergyman based in Boston.

Our last book, *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad* by Eber Pettit, was published by Willard McKinstry (1815–1899) in 1879. Pettit was a white conductor on the Railroad based on the south shore of Lake Erie, which served as a convenient stopping place on the way to Buffalo, and thence across the Niagara River to freedom.



RESURRECTION OF HENRY BOX BROWN.

Eber and his father James were both active in antislavery work and had a convenient cover for their travel through the region as manufacturers and sellers for a successful patent medicine company. The sketches were initially serialized in 1868 in the *Censor*, a Fredonia, New York-based newspaper owned by McKinstry. McKinstry then had them published as this standalone volume. Though its publication was barely removed from the events Pettit recalled, he nevertheless fears, like



Still, that the memory of the 'U.G.R.R.' already belonged to a 'past epoch in our history, the character of which even now this generation can scarcely realize.'[11] The Fisher Library copy contains a presentation inscription from McKinstry to a friend. McKinstry must have felt this project to be quite personal, as the frontispiece bears his photograph and facsimile signature, rather than that of Pettit.

These new acquisitions complement a variety of existing materials at the Fisher Library that document the experience of Black life in Canada, including the Underground Railroad. Many are included in the digital exhibition *Celebrating Black Voices* curated by a team of library staff members in 2021. Since then, the Library has also recently completed processing the Albert Jackson Family Papers, which document the career and family life of Albert Jackson (1857–1918), Canada's first Black letter carrier, who himself fled via the Underground Railroad to Toronto with his mother Ann Maria Jackson (1810–1880) and six siblings in 1858. Still's *Underground Rail Road* includes their incredible story, as well as a small illustration of Ann Maria and her children. A series of family photographs have now been digitized and made available via the Fisher Library's Flickr page, and along with the many letters, ephemera, and household receipts included in the papers, vividly document what daily life was like for one family after their successful escape to Canada. Many refugees eventually returned to the United States to reunite with family members separated by slavery, but the Jacksons chose to stay. However, life in Canada was not without struggle: Albert Jackson was demoted on his first day of the job by colleagues who refused to work alongside him. Successful activism on his behalf from the Black community in Toronto went all the way to Prime Minister John A. MacDonald (1815–1891), who had him reinstated. The papers show that Jackson devoted his life to both self-improvement and the betterment of his community, eventually purchasing several properties and becoming highly active in his church and community organizations. William Still would have been proud.

Grant Hurley
Canadiana Librarian
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

ENDNOTES

1 William M. Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad*, 2nd. ed (London: William Tweedie, 1860), 12-13.
2 Ibid., 156.
3 Ibid., vi.
4 For more on this story and Mitchell's biography, see Paul R. Wilson, "'Begging' Baptists: Central Canadian Regular Baptists and the British Fund-Raising Activism of Reverend William Troy and Reverend William M. Mitchell, 1850–1865," in *The Black Baptist Experience in Canada*, ed. Gordon L. Heath and Dudley A. Brown (McMaster Divinity College Press, 2025).
5 Andrew K. Diemer, *Vigilance: The Life of William Still, Father of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022), 8.
6 Quoted in Alex W. Black, "A New Enterprise in Our History": William Still, Conductor of *The Underground Rail Road* (1872)," *American Literary History* 32, no. 4 (2020): 669.
7 William Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 4-5.
8 Black, 676.
9 Quoted in Black, 674.
10 With thanks to Aslaku Berhanu for sharing photographs of the binding styles pasted in a salesman's version of *The Underground Rail Road* that are part of the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University Libraries.
11 Eber M. Pettit, *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad* (Fredonia, NY: Willard McKinstry, 1879), xvi.

FACING PAGE: Illustration of the 1849 'unboxing' of Henry Brown after he successfully mailed himself to freedom, from *The Underground Rail Road* (1872). William Still is pictured in the rear, holding the lid of Brown's box. **ABOVE:** Cover of the newly acquired copy of William Still's *The Underground Rail Road* (1872). Portrait of William Still and inscription to the Reverend John Muir Orrock (spelled by Still as "Orrick") in the same volume.

Gold Standard: Jacobus de Voragine's Collection of Saints' Lives

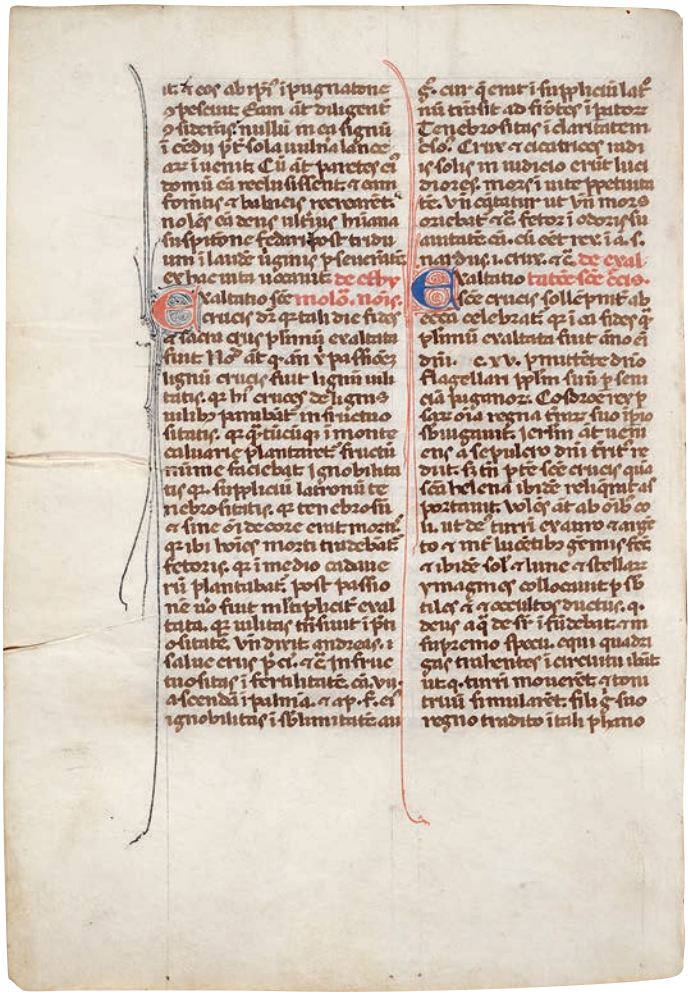
From the late 1260s we know quite a lot about Jacobus de Voragine. We know, for example, that his fellow Dominicans elected him prior of the province of Lombardy from 1267 to 1277, and again from 1281 to 1286. We know that during this time he acted as a trusted diplomat for both the Dominican Order and the Papacy. And we know that from 1292 until his death he was Archbishop of Genoa and wrote a history of the city. A successful and varied career. His earlier years are not as well documented, but concealed in this lack of evidence is the achievement for which Jacobus won lasting fame: the composition or (better) compilation, probably in the early 1260s, of the collection of saints' lives known as the *Golden Legend*, a manuscript of which the Fisher Library has recently acquired.

As a Dominican, Jacobus was, first and foremost, a preacher—the official name of the order is the *Ordo Prædicatorum* (or 'Order of Preachers')—and by the 1250s Jacobus was famous as such, even by Dominican standards. It was as an aid to preaching that he assembled the *Golden Legend*. Priests and preachers, working their way through the Christian calendar with its myriad feasts and festivals—and, in the case of mendicant orders like the Dominicans and Franciscans, working their way too around large areas of Europe—could do with a handbook of pious anecdotes to enliven their sermons. This is exactly what Jacobus provides, drawing on a variety of patristic sources as well as pre-existing collections of lives. Indeed, so successful was Jacobus that his collection quickly superseded all others and was adopted as the standard such work.

Jacobus' immediate audience was almost certainly his fellow Dominicans, and it is fitting that the Fisher's manuscript includes provenance evidence showing that it belonged to a fifteenth-century member of the Order. Two inscriptions, one at the front and one at the back, record that Nicolaus, Bishop of Tricarico, bequeathed the manuscript to the convent where he himself had joined the Dominicans: the Convent of Saints John and Paul in Venice. But even without the evidence of these inscriptions, it is clear that the book was designed for use by a travelling preacher. Written on reasonably fine vellum and in a condensed and abbreviated script, the manuscript includes only sixty-five of the original 180 or so chapters—only the most important feasts and saints. It is, in other words, a copy that both abridges the text and works to fit what remains into a portable package.

It is perhaps ironic, then, that after its arrival at Saints John and Paul, the manuscript seems to have taken a vow of immovability, for it was still in the Convent's library three hundred years later, appearing in a catalogue of the collection published in 1784. More generally, the fate of the *Golden Legend* during those three hundred years was not a happy one. Rejected by the Renaissance as crude and superstitious, and by the Reformation as superstitious and crude, the work largely sank out of sight. A lifeline was thrown by Romanticism, with its interest in the medieval, and the *Golden Legend*'s revival would continue over the nineteenth century and culminate in what is probably its most famous appearance in print: William Morris's Kelmscott Press edition of 1892, in William Caxton's translation with illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones. (A copy can be found at the Fisher.) Along with this interest in the text *per se* came a growing recognition of the *Golden Legend* as an important source for art history—Jacobus de Voragine, it turns out, is as central to an understanding of saintly iconography in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance as Ovid is to an understanding of the iconography of Classical myth.

While the text it contains is (among other things) a source for art history, the manuscript itself is a specimen of medieval art. The opening initial is historiated, showing a tonsured cleric kneeling before a Madonna and Child. Though somewhat rubbed, it preserves enough gold, blue, red, white, and pink to hint at its original vibrancy. If the cleric is not Jacobus himself, it may represent the person for



whom the manuscript was made. The foliate bar borders, meanwhile, serve as a ground for a hunting scene: a hound chasing a stag with a tree in between. Such marginal illustration is (over)ripe for allegorical interpretation. Does the stag represent Christ? The dog faith? The hunt the struggles of life? Possibly, though the depiction of this most aristocratic pursuit may simply mark the manuscript out as a high-status item. But however we interpret the illustration, we can be sure, based on style, that the artist was from Northern Europe, probably France or Flanders—unexpected given that all other evidence indicates a Northern Italian origin for the manuscript. The situation is rare but not unparallelled, with illuminators from Ypres, for example, known to have been active in Naples in the first half of the fourteenth century.

The manuscript joins a small but interesting collection relating to Jacobus de Voragine already at the Fisher Library. In 2008, the Fisher acquired a 1407 manuscript of Jacobus' *Sermones de tempore* (sermons on the Sunday gospel readings for the year) that once belonged to a convent of that other great preaching order, the Franciscans. Also in the collection are a number of printed editions, ranging in date from c. 1476 to 2008 and including, in addition to the Kelmscott, books from the presses of Wynkyn de Worde and Bruce Rogers.

Timothy Perry
Medieval Manuscript and
Early Book Librarian
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

FACING PAGE: Enlarged view of the historiated initial from the *Golden Legend*. **ABOVE:** Incipit and prologue to Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, with historiated initial showing a Madonna and Child and a tonsured cleric. Text page from Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, showing the end of the chapter on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and the beginning of the chapter on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

6 FUN FORMATS AND TEMPLATES

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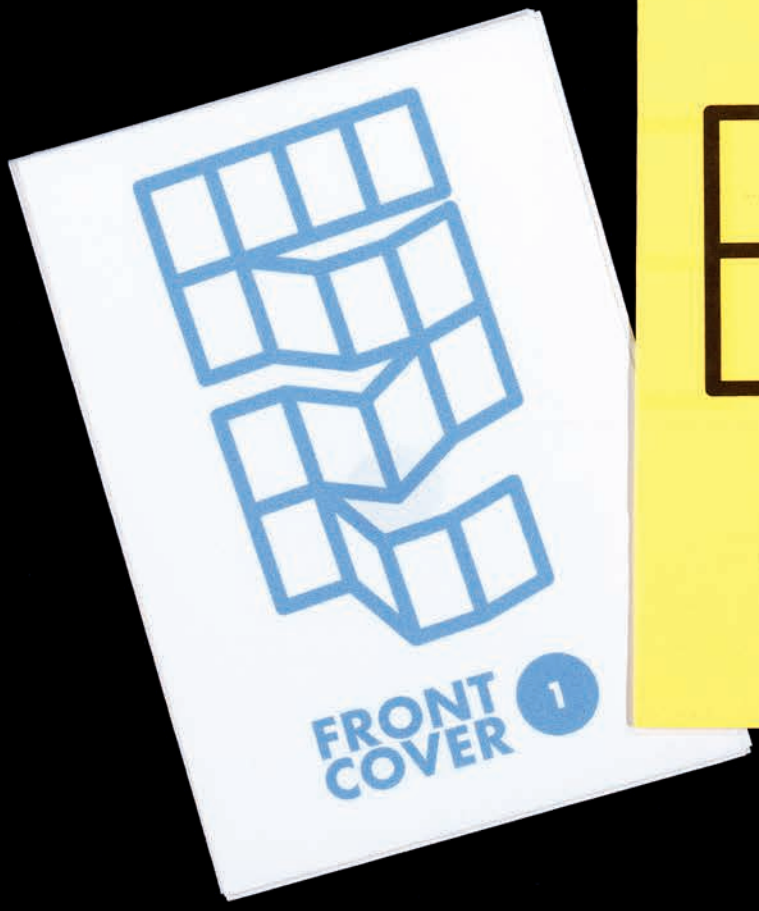
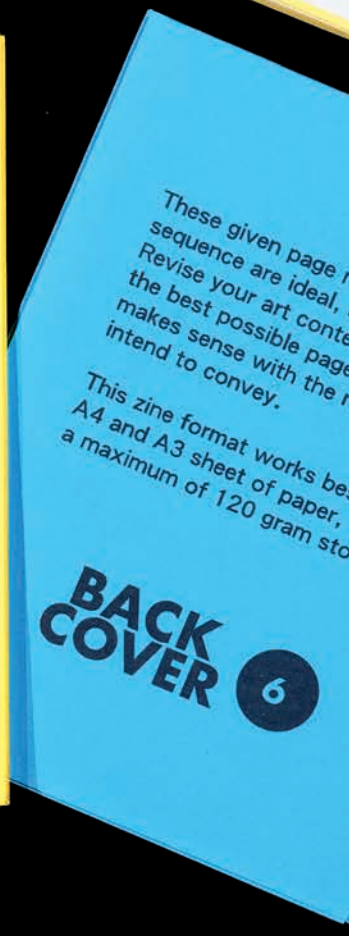
ZINE DUMMY KIT

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BACK COVER 6

Small Press Meditations on Craft

One astute way to take the pulse of our times is to turn to the world of small press, where individuals and artists model alternative ways of being and thinking. As a community of practice, 'small press' encompasses any independent and small-scale publishing initiatives. Operating on their own terms, and usually without regard for large profits, small presses tend to take more creative risks and foreground marginal or underrepresented voices and perspectives. Typically presented in popular formats—zines, chapbooks, or otherwise alternative publications—small press materials also tend to offer insight into their own means of production or lend themselves well to meditations on craft more broadly.

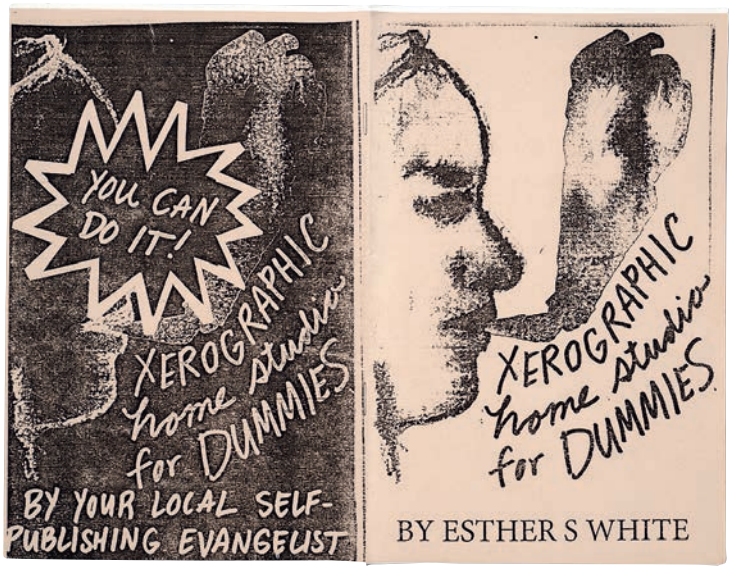
Much of the cultural value and relevance of these materials derives from their unique positioning between thought and craft. This liminal quality of small press is explored by Andrew Steeves in *Handmade* (2025), one of the first chapbooks printed at his new Press of the Varying Hare, based in Nova Scotia. (Steeves was the co-founder of the small literary publisher Gaspereau Press, which he sold in 2024.) Looking back on his school years, Steeves recalls a certain expectation 'to divide up the world in superficial ways, namely cleaving manual and material matters from intellectual and imaginative ones... Only later, in the making of books, did I find a way to reunify the work of my head and my hands.'[1] He goes on to acknowledge the beauty to be found in the slow, manual, and embodied nature of his work—in this case, letterpress—noting that 'there's intimacy and immediacy in this way of working; it unfolds at a human pace and scale.'[2] These perspectives are echoed by many recently published chapbooks and zines newly added to the Fisher Library collections, each a small but salient ode to craft.

Many of these materials reflect their own making but lean into demystifying scrappier do-it-yourself approaches to self-publishing. Some, like Wuthipol Designs' 'Zine Dummy Kits' (Bangkok, 2024–2025) take an interactive approach, bringing readers into contact with a variety of folded booklet specimens to demonstrate the potential of this format. Others offer a self-help approach, introducing the next generation of book artists to fading print and duplication technologies that are well-suited for creative experimentation. Take for instance Esther S. White's *Xerographic Home Studios for Dummies* (Northampton, MA, 2025), a zine that proudly embraces its own photocopy 'grain' and imperfections as a visible record of the maker's hand at work. By inviting readers to realize their own creative potential, these examples are already quite radical. Yet other examples approach self-publishing through a more overtly political lens, such as Marc Fischer's *Why Self-Publish Under Fascism?* (Chicago, 2025), or Vin Caponigro's *Witches in Print or, How the Patriarchy Weaponized the Printing Press to Silence Independent Women* (Boston: Snake Hair Press, 2021), which reveal how much is at stake when independent bookmaking practices are censored or threatened.

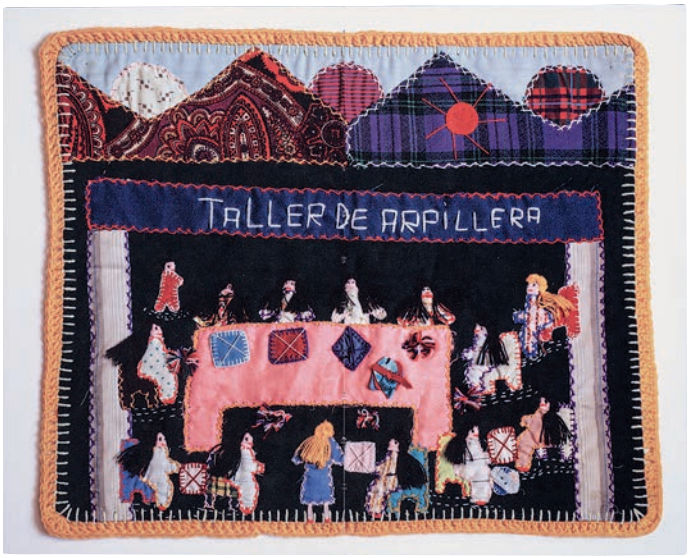
Beyond the book arts, a growing number of incoming small press materials engage with textile arts. Some emerging presses, notably Clotheslines Press (Amsterdam) and Common Threads Press (Norwich, UK), are entirely dedicated to elevating textile narratives, particularly those advancing feminist, anti-mass consumption, queer, and minority perspectives. Like visually disruptive clotheslines crisscrossing neighbourhoods, Clotheslines Press aims to link and draw attention to women's unseen domestic labour and resistance efforts. Their 2025 publication *All Work is Women's Work* spotlights 'De Naaisterbode' ('The Seamstresses' Courier') as a relic of the radical print culture at the heart of Amsterdam's Seamstresses' Union in the twentieth century (one of the Netherlands' first all-female labour unions). In the same spirit, Common Threads Press publications introduce readers to a diversity of non-mainstream

LEFT: 'Zine Dummy Kit' by Tum Wuthipol Ujathammarat. (Bangkok: Wuthipol Designs, [2024]).

FIRST ROW: *Xerographic Home Studios for Dummies* by Esther S. White (Northampton, MA, 2025). duff pam 00872. *Softness: A Meditation on Knitting* by Jean Oberlander (Common Threads Press, 2025). **SECOND ROW:** *We Will Find Them: Arpilleras and the Political Art of Chile Under Pinochet* by Jess White. (Common Threads Press, 2026).


YOU CAN DO IT!
XEROGRAPHIC home studios for DUMMIES
BY YOUR LOCAL SELF-PUBLISHING EVANGELIST
XEROGRAPHIC home studios for DUMMIES
BY ESTHER S WHITE

WE WILL FIND THEM
Arpilleras and the Political Art of Chile Under Pinochet
TRIBUNALES DE JUSTICIA
¿DÓNDE ESTÁN LOS DESAPARECIDOS?
Jess White



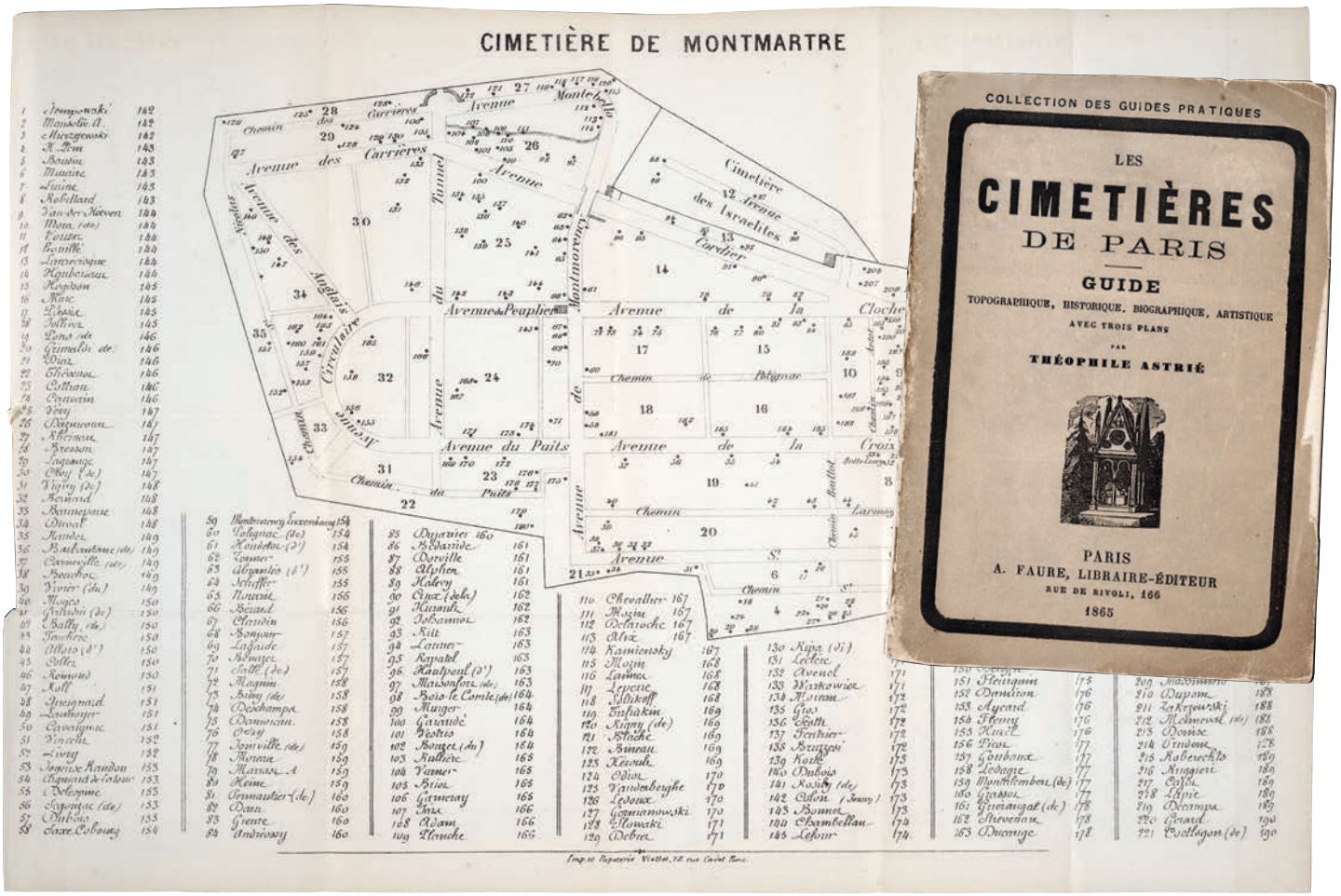
fibre art practices and histories. These range from Jean Oberlander's *Softness* (2025), a poetic meditation on mending cherished garments to textile-based creative outlets for trans, disabled, Black, and Latin American communities around the world. Their most recent publication, *We Will Find Them* (2026) by Jess White, explores the critical role of textiles in Chilean resistance under Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. This convergence of fibre arts and small press underscores just how deeply hands-on and embodied creative traditions shape identity and foster human connection.

Each of these insights into enduring creative practices join a long line of books about books and craftsmanship that represent a core strength of the library's collections. They reaffirm that, even in the digital age, bibliographical work is manual work. It is labour intensive, rooted in tradition, demands presence, and is human to its core. To future researchers, these zines and chapbooks are vessels of connection, documenting lived experiences and artistic responses to issues that deeply affect communities. They also extend invitations to reconnect with tangible traces of our own cultural heritage, work with our hands, and continue experimenting.

Leora Bromberg
Acquisitions Specialist
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

ENDNOTES

1 Andrew Steeves, *Andrew Steeves on the use of that Questionable Term "Handmade" as it Relates to Contemporary Letterpress Books* (Black River Lake, NS: Press of the Varying Hare, 2025), 1.
2 Steeves, 4.



The Paris *Flâneur*

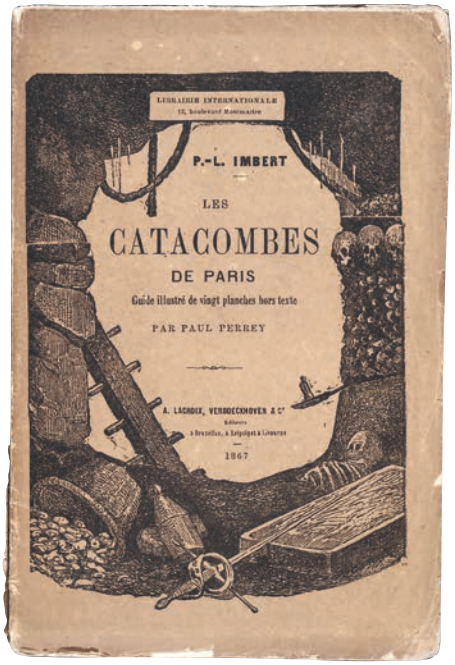
The excitement of exploring Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century is conveyed in several recent additions to our collections. Three guides, published in the second half of the nineteenth century, appeared during a period of great change for the city. A massive public works program that began in 1853 saw the demolition of old neighbourhoods and the building of wide new streets, squares, and parks to ease congestion and improve sanitation. The 1867 Paris Exposition included thirty-two countries and attracted eleven million visitors over eight months. The size of the city tripled because of its annexation of surrounding *communes* into *arrondissements*.

It was in this setting that author Théophile Astrié (dates unknown) offered his guide to the Paris cemeteries, *Guide dans les cimetières de Paris*. His introduction stated that the eighteen cemeteries within the walls of the city were abandoned in 1789 to create three larger cemeteries outside the city walls: the North (Montmartre), the South (Montparnasse) and the East (Père Lachaise). He waxed poetic about the beauty of the cemeteries, stating that they have lost their former ugliness and are now 'in picturesque locations, converted into magnificent gardens, intersected by shady paths', calling them 'melancholy stations situated between the boundaries of two worlds' which, rather than inspiring fear, 'bring a profound delight to the soul'.

The cemetery guide offered biographical, topographical, and artistic information about the monuments and notable people in the three cemeteries. The author opened with a promise to update the work regularly and an openness to feedback. He hoped the guide would be considered 'a pious tribute paid to the remains of those who distinguished their century and their country' and hoped to 'highlight one of the splendors of the new Paris'.

'Follow me my dear friend. I possess the ball of Ariadne's thread, and my hand will never cease to press yours.' This is the assurance of Pierre-Leonce Imbert (1842–?) in the introduction to his volume describing a venture into the labyrinthine catacombs of Paris, *Les catacombes de Paris; guide illustré* [sic] *de vingt planches hors.* Structural capacity, building collapses, and growing pains related to the city's cemeteries and underground spaces resulted in the consolidation of its ancient quarries into an area beneath the city that would go on to hold the remains of more than six million people. From the mid-to-late 1780s, bones were moved from other Paris cemeteries to create the underground ossuary, and several decades later renovations were done to organize the space for visitors. In

OPENING PAGE: Cover of *Les cimetières de Paris* and foldout map of Montmartre cemetery. **BELOW:** Cover of *Les catacombes de Paris* and illustration by Paul Perrey; front cover of the *Secret Directory for Foreign Bachelors in Paris*.



March 1867, while having an evening walk, three botanists, two tourists, artist Paul Perrey, and the author Imbert spotted an underground access point in the middle of a construction site and decided to venture inside to explore the catacombs on their own. As he described their descent through the upper and then lower chambers to the ossuaries, he discussed where some of the bones came from, the ongoing improvements to the structures by city workers, and the bats, rats, and bugs that they encountered on their way. The group stopped for a snack of one *sou* bread by candlelight, and recorded some of the many stone inscriptions they passed in the different chambers. When Imbert wrote this *flâneur*'s guide, public tours of the catacombs happened only every three months. Demand increased openings to monthly, then weekly during Paris' expositions, until finally they were open daily.

The only one of the three guides made to explore the land of the living, and the only one with content in English, is the multilingual *Le guide secret pour étrangers et viveurs=Secret Directory for Foreign Bachelors in Paris=Zum amusieren der Jungersellern=Casas nocturnas* (Paris, c. 1900). The guide has general touristic information, but also invites the reader to enjoy the 'pleasures of Montmartre', promising information about neighbourhoods, theatres, balls, concerts, and artistic cafés 'where girls look after visitors and where choice is easy.' With a focus on the pleasures of the night, the guide offers information in English and German in addition to the original French, although the exact information appears to vary. For example, the French part includes lists of establishments and addresses, while the English portion is missing much of this information, as well as lacking the entire food section.

These three guides complement our existing collection of travel guides but have a very different feel. Though they were made only a few decades after the first Baedecker and Murray guides (some of the first guides produced for broad circulation at the beginning of mass tourism) were published, and the genre began to solidify, they keep to a more relaxed and narrative style, and retain a charming, evocative character that induces strong nostalgia for the travel of the past.

Elizabeth Ridolfo
Special Collections Projects Librarian
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

Maintaining or Returning to Traditions after Forced Conversion or Exile: Three Recent Judaica Acquisitions

ואני תפלתי לך ידוד עת רצון אלהים ברב חסדך ענני באמת ישעך :

סדר תפלות

ופיוטים וקרובץ לימים הנוראים כמנהג קדישי עליון וחסידים
הראשונים גאוני עולם רבותינו הצרפתים זכותם יגן עלינו אכי"ר
כי מן הבאר ההיא ישקו העדרים להפיק שבע ריצון בעת לחננה
באמרי שפר ודברי פיום בהגשה לתפלה בנעם אמירה וכונה
ישרה שנה שמתריעין עליה בתחילתה ואחריתה תבורך
משנים הטובות בסליחה וכפרה פרנסה וכלכלה
גאולה וישועה ורב טוב לבית ישראל בבנין
אריאל ובא לציון גואל בב"א כי"ר

נכתב לתשוקת הכבודה והצנועה מרת קילא חנה טריוש
מבת אשת הקצין כמ' יאושעחי מונטאלצינא יצו ה' יזכם
לקרות ולהגות בו המה ובניהם ובני בניהם עד עולם אכי"ר

באסטי

שנת כי ביתי בית תפלה יקרא לכל העמים

Con Licenza del Divino Superiore

תפלה לדוד שמעה ידוד צדק הקשיבה רנתי האזינה תפלתי בלא שפתי מרמה : שמעה תפלתי ידוד ישועתך

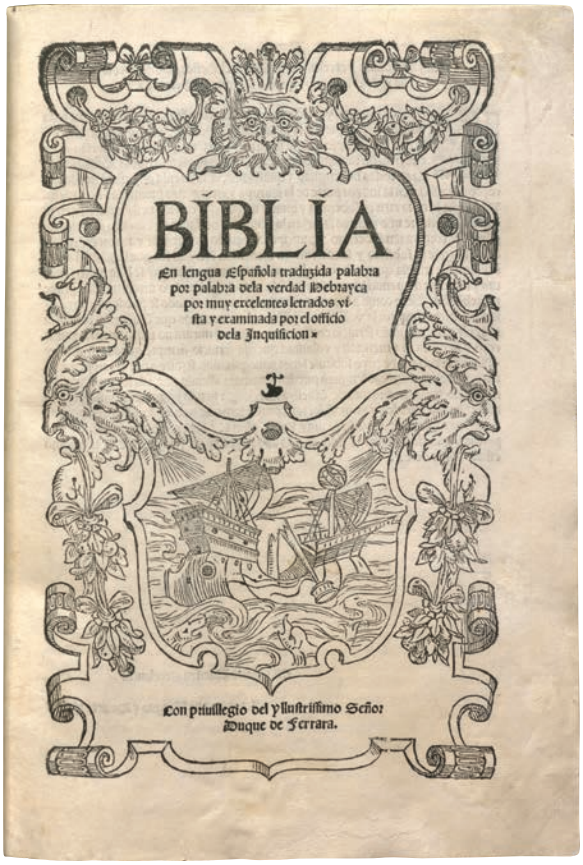
A 1

א א

Jews had been living in France ever since antiquity. By the high medieval period, the Jewish community in France was a large and widespread community and was the home of many well-known rabbis, and it had developed some distinct traditions. Yet throughout that period the Jewish communities faced the onslaughts of the Crusades, as well as various, often regional, expulsions. This was so until their final expulsion from France decreed by King Charles VI (1368–1422) in 1394. (Jews would subsequently return to France only centuries later.) Many of the Jewish exiles emigrated to Italy, where they adopted the customs and traditions of the veteran communities that absorbed them. However, the Jewish refugees who settled in three towns in the Piedmont region (North-East) of Italy—Asti, Fossano, and Monclavo—while likewise adopting many local traditions, clung to some of their unique traditions, namely in the rite of their prayers on the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). While similar to the Ashkenazi (Central and Eastern Europe) rite in many respects, this unique rite, now known by the acronym for those three towns (APaM), is distinct in many others, such as in some *piyutim* (liturgical poems) and *seliḥot* (penitential prayers) that it includes. Amazingly, although this rite continued to be recited in those communities for centuries after the expulsion, including into the twentieth century, their *maḥzor* (holiday prayer book) was never printed. Rather, during those centuries they were continuously copied by hand and recited only from those manuscripts.[1]

Last year the Fisher Library was able to acquire one such manuscript, a *maḥzor* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur according to the APaM rite. In fact, the title page explicitly states that the text in this *maḥzor* is 'according to the tradition of…the early French rabbis'. As attested further in the title page, this manuscript was produced in Asti in 1776 (5536 in the Jewish calendar) for the use of an important woman, Kila Ḥanah Treves, wife of a prominent man named Yeoshu'a Ḥai Montaltsina. It is noteworthy that, while the woman's last name, Treves, appears to attest that her family came from the French town of Troyes, her husband's last name, Montaltsina, implies that he (or his family) came from the Italian town Montalcino, which is south of Florence

OPENING PAGE: Title page of 1776 *maḥzor* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur according to the APaM rite. **BELOW:** *Ketubah* from Gibraltar, dated 15 Ḥeshvan 5587 (15 November 1826). Title page of the Ferrara Bible.


BIBLIA
En lengua Eſpañola traduzida palabra
por palabra dela verdad Hebrayca
por muy excelentes letrados vi-
ſta y examinada por el officio
dela Inquiſicion.
Con priuilegio del yllustriſſimo Señor
Duque de Ferrara.

and thus quite far from Asti. This raises the (perhaps unanswerable) question: whether Kila Ḥanah maintained her family's traditions that were not shared by her husband, or perhaps her husband's family had moved to Asti at some point and adopted the unique High Holidays' rite of its Jewish community.

Like its French counterpart, the Spanish Jewish community had its roots in antiquity, and it too produced some of the best-known rabbis and some of the most important Jewish works. Jews in Spain thrived between the eighth and eleventh centuries, a period known as the 'Golden Age' of the Jews in Spain. Yet, the condition of the Iberian Jewish communities started declining from the end of the eleventh century. Anti-Jewish sentiment and incitements increased toward the end of the fourteenth century, leading to persecutions and forced conversion of many Jews. Many of these *conversos* continued to practice Judaism in secret. They and their descendants were then referred to by the term of abuse, *marranos*. The continued practice of Judaism by *marranos* led to more antagonism toward all *conversos* and, of course, towards Jews who had not converted and were seen as a bad influence on the 'new Christians'. Eventually, the Catholic monarchs expelled all the Jews from Spain in 1492. This was repeated in Portugal in 1497.

This past year, the Fisher Library purchased a fascinating *ketubah*. A *ketubah* is a traditional Jewish marriage contract which a groom is required to provide for his bride on their wedding day. It is intended to protect the woman, primarily by establishing the man's financial obligations to her in case of divorce or widowhood, as well as other obligations undertaken by the groom. Although not obligatory in any way, to this day it is not uncommon for *ketubot* (its plural form) to be written by hand by a scribe, and they have often been decorated in many Jewish communities around the world. Thus, although the text is generally similar everywhere, *ketubot* reflect the scribal and artistic traditions of the areas and times in which they were created. The Fisher's newly purchased *ketubah* is from Gibraltar, dated 15 Ḥeshvan 5587 (15 November 1826), and it too is written by hand and illustrated. It is on parchment and is especially large (over fifty centimetres long and fifty centimetres wide) and exquisitely decorated. Its margins are adorned with symmetrical vegetal patterns on both sides, and on the top is a large crown. These features are parallelled in other nineteenth century *ketubot* from Gibraltar. However, uniquely, in this ketubah the crown is held by a pair of cherubs (putti). Perhaps more importantly, the text of the *ketubah* explicitly says it is written 'according to the stipulations, customs and enactments practised, stipulated and enacted by the communities exiled from Castile.' Indeed, while the Jewish exiles from Iberia spread throughout the Mediterranean and parts of Europe, some of those who settled in Morocco eventually made their way back into the peninsula by settling in Gibraltar in the period following its capture by the British in 1704. Thus, this *ketubah* attests

to the continued adherence to the distinct rite of the Jews exiled from Spain in 1492 by their descendants centuries later and despite repeated migration.

With the continued rise of anti-Jewish and anti-*marrano* sentiment in Iberia, and given the pressures of the Inquisition, many *marranos*, and even true *conversos*, left the peninsula throughout the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. Having left Iberia generations after being forced to leave their faith, the *marranos* attempted to return to Judaism. Yet, their knowledge of Judaism was minimal; often they did not even know the Hebrew language. Consequently, in the sixteenth century, *marranos* who had left Iberia began printing Jewish books, especially prayer books and Bibles, in Spanish. The beginning of this *marrano* printing was in the North Italian city of Ferrara. There had already been a Jewish community as well as a Hebrew printing house in Ferrara prior to the expulsions from Iberia. As the *marrano* community of Ferrara grew around the middle of the sixteenth century, the need for Jewish books in Spanish for that community grew as well. Consequently, a *marrano* from Spain named Yom-Tob Atias, whose Christian name was Jerónimo de Vargas, established a press. He published a couple of Jewish prayer books in Spanish in 1552. In 1553, a *marrano* from Portugal named Abraham Usque, whose Christian name was Duarte Pinhel, joined Atias on his greatest undertaking: the publishing of a complete Hebrew Bible translated into Spanish.

The Fisher Library has recently acquired a copy of this Bible, now famously known as the 'Ferrara Bible'. It is a very literal translation from the Hebrew, as stated in its full title: 'The Bible in the Spanish language, translated word for word from the true Hebrew by very excellent scholars, seen and examined by the office of the Inquisition'. The title page, which also states that it received the permission of the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole II d'Este (1508–1559), is beautifully illustrated and includes a depiction of a ship with a broken mast being tossed around in a stormy sea. This has been seen as intended to symbolize the situation of the Jewish people, and especially of the *conversos*.

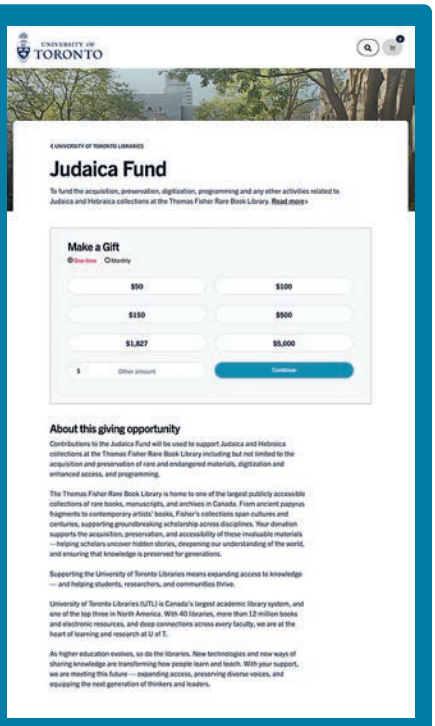
The Ferrara Bible became extremely influential on Spanish translations of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and would be reproduced in many later editions. In extant copies of the original Ferrara Bible, there are, however, several variations, most noticeably in the dedication on the verso of the title page and in the colophon at the end. The dedication in some copies is to the Duke of Ferrara and states that its printers were Jerónimo de Vargas and Duarte Pinhel. In other copies the dedication is to Doña Gracia Nasi (1510–1569), the famous female *marrano* philanthropist who supported literary activities among Ferrara's Jews, and lists the printers' Jewish names, Yom-Tob Atias and Abraham Usque. Again, the colophon of some copies includes their Christian names, as well as a date according to the Julian calendar, 1 March 1553, while the colophon in other copies lists their Jewish names and supplies a date according to the Jewish calendar, 14 Adar 5313—which, incidentally (or not), is the date of the festival of Purim. Some scholars have surmised that this is evidence that the Bible was initially printed in two versions, or editions, intended for two distinct audiences, Jewish and Christian, suggesting that all copies with the 'Christian' dedication also had the 'Christian' colophon and that all copies with the 'Jewish' dedication also had the 'Jewish' colophon. Scholars also pointed to other differences between the two supposed versions, which are otherwise identical, in the translation of verses which were at the centre of disputes between Christians and Jews (e.g., Isaiah 7:14).[2] However, later scholarship has shown that often those differences in translation do not align with their supposed respective title pages. Moreover, research of a larger number of copies has revealed that the dedications and colophons do not always align as initially suggested, and some copies have a 'Christian' dedication and a 'Jewish' colophon, and vice versa. Instead, it is suggested that the Ferrara Bible was printed in only one version intended for Jews-*Marranos*, but that it underwent an extensive process of correction, as errors in page order and typos were found and corrected in subsequent copies.[3] Curiously, the 'new' Fisher copy includes both title pages and both colophons. Was this just another version of the original or, more likely, was a second title page and a second colophon added to this copy by one of its owners? Answering these questions will require further research.

These remarkable acquisitions thus shed an important light on the lives and lesser-known rites of exiled and persecuted Jewish communities and reflect their attempts to preserve or return to their traditions, generations after expulsion or forced conversion and far away from the place in which those traditions first took shape. They open new avenues for potential research by students and scholars.

Nadav Sharon
Jewish Studies Librarian
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

ENDNOTES

1 Daniel Goldshmidt, *Meḥkere Tefilah u-Fiyuṭ* (Jerusalem, 1979) 80–121 [Hebrew].
2 Cecil Roth, "The Marrano Press at Ferrara," *The Modern Language Review* 38, No. 4 (Oct. 1943), 307-317.
3 Stanley Rypins, "The Ferrara Bible at Press," *The Library*, 5. ser. 10 (1955), 244-269.



Did you know that you can now directly donate to the Judaica fund, which supports the purchase of new material in this area?

Visit **https://uoft.me/judaica-fund**

Life in Displaced Persons Camps: Sketches by Ivan But

The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library has recently acquired a remarkable collection of drawings by Ivan Nicholas But (1884–1960). This multifaceted collection sheds light on an artist's engagement with themes of tradition and religion, the experiences of immigrant journeys, and life in exile. Eleven unsigned and undated sketches in coloured pencil depict folk costumes from Southeastern Europe, including various regions in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pencil sketches in black and white feature Orthodox Christian iconography (two sketches) and decorative patterns (ten sketches). The Fisher Library purchased the collection from Bjarne Tokerud Bookseller in 2025. According to the bookseller, Ivan But's wife, Olga Floroff-But (1886–1975), gifted the collection to its former owner shortly before her death in 1975.

The largest part of the collection depicts life in displaced persons (DP) camps. Out of fifty-two sketches, twenty-one include captions below the images. Some sketches are signed by the author, and most are undated. Also included are four sketchbooks belonging to the artist, containing seventy-three sketches and studies. The captions are notable for their often darkly humorous character, as well as the original punctuation, orthography, and capitalization. Ivan But used such characters as ъ (the hard sign) and ѣ (iē), which are not used in modern Russian following the orthographic reform in 1917, but which remained common in émigré publications. In the last months of the Second World War, many people fled their homes in the territories soon to be occupied by the Red Army. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) and, later, the International Refugee Organization (IRO), set up and ran DP camps in Allied-occupied Germany and Austria. In a DP camp, the But family joined other uprooted groups, which included prisoners of war, civilians deported to Germany, and concentration camp survivors. Many refugees never returned to their countries because they were opposed to Soviet rule or feared persecution upon return.

Some of the drawings are intimate representations of the experiences of an artist and his family. One sketch, depicting a pensive woman standing with her luggage in a forested area, is captioned *Зоечка на пути въ Канаду* ('Zoechka on the Way to Canada'). *Зоечка* is Zoja Zozulin (1909–1963), the artist's daughter. Together with her husband, Igor Zozulin (1908–1963), she is depicted in several sketches as they prepare to leave for Canada. This was not the first experience of dislocation for the family. According to digitized DP registration records accessed via the Arolsen Archives (formerly the International Tracing Service), the But family were members of the Russian diaspora in Yugoslavia, listing Belgrade as their last permanent place of residence prior to becoming refugees in Germany during the Second World War. As such, a few drawings in the collection depict scenes of Belgrade in the 1920s. But and his family belonged to the so-called 'old' emigration—refugees from the 1917 October Revolution—residing in countries outside of the Soviet sphere of influence. As the But family became displaced persons again at the end of the war, they refused to return to a now-socialist Yugoslavia. In 1945, they arrived first at the transit and resettlement facility, Munich-Freimann DP Center, housed in the former barracks (SS-Kaserne). They were then transferred to DP camp Schleissheim in Bavaria. Several of But's sketches identify the location as DP camp Schleissheim, and it is likely that many of the uncaptioned sketches also depict everyday life in this DP camp. The family remained in Schleissheim until winter 1950, when they departed for Canada on the ship *Beaverbrae*, landing first in Halifax, and then travelling to Vancouver, where they settled. A sketchbook of nine pencil drawings contains sketches of street views

and scenes from Vancouver, c. 1950. Ivan But died at Vancouver General Hospital on 22 October 1960, and he and his family members are buried in the Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver.

The artist depicts everyday life in the camps, employing recurring themes such as overcrowding in the barracks, food rationing, a general lack of food provisions, and poor sanitary conditions, while his short satirical captions provide social commentary. The depictions of characters in exaggerated, cartoonish ways offer a fruitful avenue for exploring how satire and humour document the unsettling or traumatic conditions of post-war displacement. Equally informative are the uncaptioned images depicting communal everyday life experiences in the camps, including doing laundry and procuring food, or showing the interior of barrack spaces, medical inspections, and other activities. Several studies and sketches depict refugees waiting in line or carrying what was most likely pea soup, a popular staple in DP camps.

Ivan But's DP sketches are a remarkable group of primary sources for researchers examining artistic representations of community life in the DP camp, its spaces, adaptations, and homemaking in transitory conditions. Other notable collections of DP materials at the Fisher Library are the John Luczkiw Collection of DP publications, writings from the DP Camp Korigen in the collection of the Pip family papers, and the Valentyna and Michael Pashkievich collection of Belarusian DP periodicals. The purchase of Ivan But's sketches complements the growing holdings of visual materials related to DP experiences at the Fisher Library, which include ephemera by Ukrainian refugees in the Luczkiw collection, Leonid Denysenko's collection of drawings, posters, and illustrations from DP camps in Germany and transitory camps in Australia, as well as a collection of pencil and ink portraits of Ukrainian refugees from the DP camp in Mannheim by an unknown artist.

Natalia Barykina
Reference Specialist
Petro Jacyk Central & East
European Resource Centre

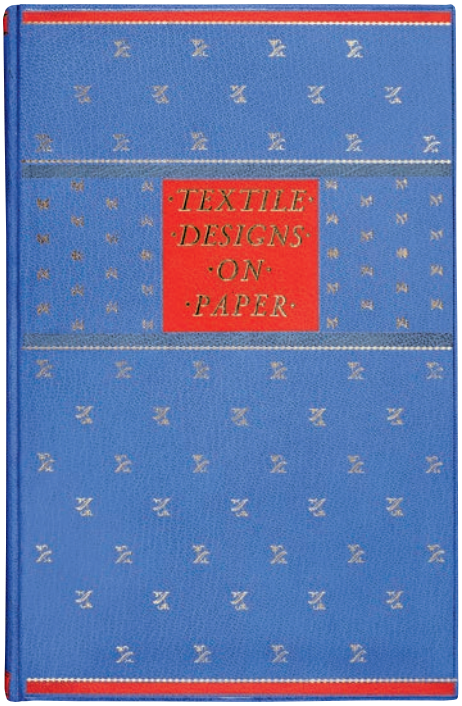
FACING PAGE: A drawing captioned *Зоечка на пути въ Канаду* ('Zoechka on the Way to Canada'). A drawing captioned *DP прыбылъ въ Канаду* ('DP arrived in Canada'), signed But. **TOP ROW:** DP camp scene of soup distribution. **BOTTOM ROW:** DP camp wedding scene. DP camp barrack scene.

Byzantium on the West Coast: The Fine Press Meets the World of Reference

There is usually a buzz of excitement in the Fisher Library's workroom when a new book from Barbara Hodgson and Claudia Cohen arrives from the West Coast. Hodgson and Cohen have been collaborators since their first publication, *The Temperamental Rose and Other Ways of Seeing Colour*, published in 2007. The book, the first of what became a series of four centred around the theme of colour, was a survey of historical—and fictional—colour charts inspired by a box of vials filled with pigments bought by Hodgson in a French flea market, coupled with historical colour charts that Cohen owned. This book and their subsequent collaborations, fourteen in total, established a template for all of the pair's work: reference works that carry the patina of a fine press work, with small print runs due to the craft and care put into their production, along with the many samples contained in them.

Their latest, *Textile Designs on Paper: an Archive from Early 19th-Century France*, arrived early in the new year, like a belated holiday gift. Removing it from its shipping packaging, it was obvious this was going to be another sumptuous work from the pair. Its beige and blue clamshell box, designed and built by Cohen from her Seattle-based studio, is, in and of itself, gorgeous to the eye and to the touch. Inside the box are the book, bound (also by Cohen) in blue Morocco leather with extensive tooling in twenty-two karat gold, and three separate inserted booklets consisting of textile samples, deluxe textile samples, and dye samples. The book is, in short, an exploration of the designs from textile mills in two centres of France: Jouy-en-Josas, near Versailles, and Alsace, a region in the east. But like many of their previous works, the primary focus is on imaginative uses of paper in the book format—in this case, how paper was used as a vehicle for exquisitely elaborate gouache-painted designs intended for use in the textile trade.

For *Textile Designs on Paper*, Hodgson and Cohen brought on another collaborator, textile historian Susan Meller, who has written about textile design and craft for over forty years. In fact, it was her collection of nineteenth-century French albums filled with small pattern designs painted in gouache—part of an



extensive textile archive she's maintained going back to the 1970s—that formed the basis for the project. Each copy of the book—it has been issued in two states, with the Fisher holding one of the ten deluxe copies that come with the textile sample inserts—includes approximately ninety of these gouache paintings, along with an essay by Meller on the history of the designs, techniques, and uses of printed French textiles, and an essay by Cohen on the pigments and dyes used to produce the paintings and related fabrics. It is accompanied by a booklet of cotton fabrics with patterns and colours that put the gouache paintings in context. Included swatches of paisley, floral, geometric, abstract, and other designs were printed by the techniques of the age, such as block, copperplate, roller, resist, and discharge. As Meller writes in her essay, the textile designs in the book come from an exceptionally innovative period in the history of printed textiles. 'The 18th century was drawing to a close and the Industrial Revolution was giving rise to new printing techniques and exciting dye discoveries at an unprecedented rate, allowing a profusion of pattern possibilities to be reproduced on cloth as never before.'

As Hodgson explained in a recent email exchange, Meller's knowledge of textile printing techniques complemented Hodgson's and Cohen's expertise and familiarity with paints and colours. 'We saw this as a wonderful opportunity to learn more about colour,' she wrote. 'It led us to experiment with textile dyes and how the painted designs could have been used to help dyers produce an extensive palette of colours out of a limited range of natural dyes.' She pointed to one particularly challenging colour: 'A seemingly simple goal turned into a deep dive into the methods of achieving the highly prized Turkey Red, a colour that continues to fascinate and challenge would-be dyers.'

Textile Designs marks the third release from the Byzantium imprint created by Hodgson and Cohen, which began with *Paper Botanists* in 2022. (Its second book, *Marbled Paper*, was profiled in *Halcyon* No. 73.). Previously, its books were produced under the Heavenly Monkey imprint (as HM Editions) by Rollin Milroy—however he encouraged them to start their own imprint (he continues to print the sheets for the books). From the start, going back to their first books, the pair's focus has been on imaginative uses of paper in the book format. For example, in its first, *The Temperamental Rose*, they created a pop-up colour model of Dante's 'Purgatory'. For *After Image: Playing with Colour in all its Dimensions* (2009), templates for three-dimensional toys were included.

The pair will continue their exploration of historical methods and materials in the graphic arts, creating books with the utmost care in design and production. While all the Hodgson-Cohen collaborations are beautifully crafted, Hodgson insists that they succeed not only because of their fine press aesthetic, but because the books are built around solid research, especially into history and processes. It comes from a conviction that its books must have a purpose other than to 'just look good,' she writes. 'At times it seems somewhat futile to expend so much time and energy into background research and writing, when we produce only 30 or so copies of any title. After all, how many people are ever going to read any of it? The certainty that this is the correct approach is confirmed from time to time, when a reader surfaces with an appreciative comment.'

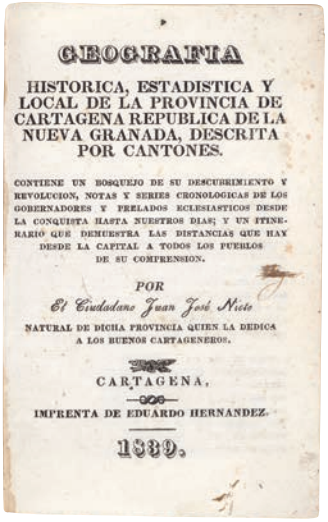
That's certainly the case here at Fisher as we again anticipate the delivery of their next work, when we can all gather around upon its arrival.

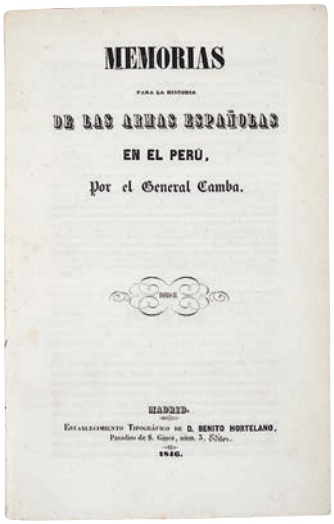
John Shoesmith
Outreach Librarian
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

FACING PAGE: Sample textile from *Textile Designs on Paper.* **ABOVE:** Cover binding, *Textile Designs on Paper.* Turkey Red Painted Samples c. 1828, from *Textile Designs on Paper.*

Politics, Provenance, and a Republic in Print: Early Colombian Imprints from the Library of Malcolm Deas

LOS TRABAJADORES
DE
TIERRA CALIENTE
(REMINISCENCIAS)
POR MEDARDO RIVAS
Luis Cuervas C
BOGOTA
IMPRENTA Y LIBRERÍA DE M. RIVAS
1899


GEOGRAFIA
HISTORICA, ESTADISTICA Y LOCAL DE LA PROVINCIA DE CARTAGENA REPUBLICA DE LA NUEVA GRANADA, DESCRITA POR CANTONES.
CONTIENE UN BOSQUEJO DE SU DESCUBRIMIENTO Y REVOLUCION, NOTAS Y SERIES CRONOLOGICAS DE LOS GOBERNADORES Y PRELADOS ECLESIASTICOS DESDE LA CONQUISTA HASTA NUESTROS DIAS; Y UN ITINERARIO QUE DEMUESTRA LAS DISTANCIAS QUE HAY DESDE LA CAPITAL A TODOS LOS PUEBLOS DE SU COMPRENSION.
POR
El Ciudadano Juan José Nieto
NATURAL DE DICHA PROVINCIA QUIEN LA DEDICA A LOS BUENOS CARTAGENEROS.
CARTAGENA,
IMPRENTA DE EDUARDO HERNANDEZ.
1839.


MEMORIAS
DE LAS ARMAS ESPAÑOLAS
EN EL PERÚ,
Por el General Camba.
MADRID.
D. BENITO MORTELANO.
1846.

This past year, the Fisher Library acquired a remarkable collection of books that together recount a story of nineteenth-century Colombia: of the long transition from colony to republic, of the intellectual and political labour of nation-making, and of the myriad ways in which local life, civil conflict, religion, language, and literature were recorded in print.

Comprising over 160 volumes and 250 works, the collection was originally compiled by British historian Malcolm Deas (1941–2023), a founding director of the Latin American Centre at St. Antony's College, Oxford. Best known for his work on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Colombia, Deas wrote with depth and care about the country's political institutions, civil wars, regional power structures, and cultures of violence. His work was well received by both academy and government in Colombia, leading to his appointment as presidential policy advisor between 1990–1994, and to his naturalization as Colombian citizen in 2008. As such, the collection reflects the sustained intellectual commitment of one of the most respected voices in Colombian historiography who, over a period of five decades, volume by volume, assembled one of the most striking private collections of Colombian print culture outside of the country itself.

These works, of which the largest concentration are nineteenth-century Colombian imprints, trace the formation of public life across that century: from early histories of national independence and republican governance, to works of law, political controversy, geography, biography, devotion, and fiction. Particularly notable are the many books written by Colombia's early political figures. From Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera (1798–1878) and Rafael Reyes (1849–1921), to José Manuel Marroquín (1827–1908) and Juan José Nieto (1804–1866), these books place early presidents and reformers directly within the printed record—and through the inclusion of dedicatory inscriptions and ownership markings, further reflect the afterlives of these writings amongst Colombia's political elite.

And yet, the collection does not only present Colombia through the lens of statecraft or crisis. Works such as Medardo Rivas' (1825–1901) *Los trabajadores de tierra caliente* (1899) and Jose Nieto's *Geografia historica, estadistica y local de la Provincia de Cartagena* (1839) trace the local cultures and everyday lives of Colombia's diverse regional inhabitants. At the same time, manuals of conduct, devotional texts, literary histories, bibliographies, and biographies broaden this national narrative to reflect the intellectual and cultural currents through which Colombian life was experienced and recorded over more than a century.

Most interesting, however, are the stories these books present to us beyond the text itself. Indeed, throughout the collection, binders' tickets, owners' stamps, presentation signatures, and dedicatory inscriptions offer a different kind of evidence: giving insight into where books were made, who owned them, and the communities through which they circulated. This evidence allows us to reconstruct the bibliographic ecosystems from which they emerged.

Among the Bogotá imprints, for instance, frequently occurring binders' tickets such as that of Ismael González, and booksellers' labels such as the *Librería Barcelonesa de Soldevilla y Curriols*, invite us to imagine the commercial bustle of Colombia's capital. Here, in the shops and stalls around the Plaza de Bolívar, printers, booksellers, binders, and readers each formed part of a bibliographic network connecting the life of the book to the life of the city. The same evidence carries us into more intimate spaces as well: into the doctors' offices and private libraries suggested by ownership inscriptions, into the friendships and patronage networks

FACING PAGE: Title page of *Los Trabajadores de tierra caliente* (1899). Title page of *Geografia historica, estadistica y local de la Provincia de Cartagena...* (1839), written by novelist, abolitionist, and first Afro-Colombian president, Juan José Nieto. Title page and map of South America at the back of *Memorias para la historia de las armas Españolas en el Peru* (1846). **BELOW:** Binder's ticket of Ismael González on the inner cover of *La reforma politica en Colombia* (1885), written by former Colombian president Rafael Núñez.

visible in presentation copies, and into the social circles of politicians, writers, and scholars who exchanged books as gifts, tokens, and instruments of influence. In this way, a stamp, a bookplate, or an annotated endpaper tells us something that no printed page can: where a book has been, who valued it, and the local worlds that it inhabited.

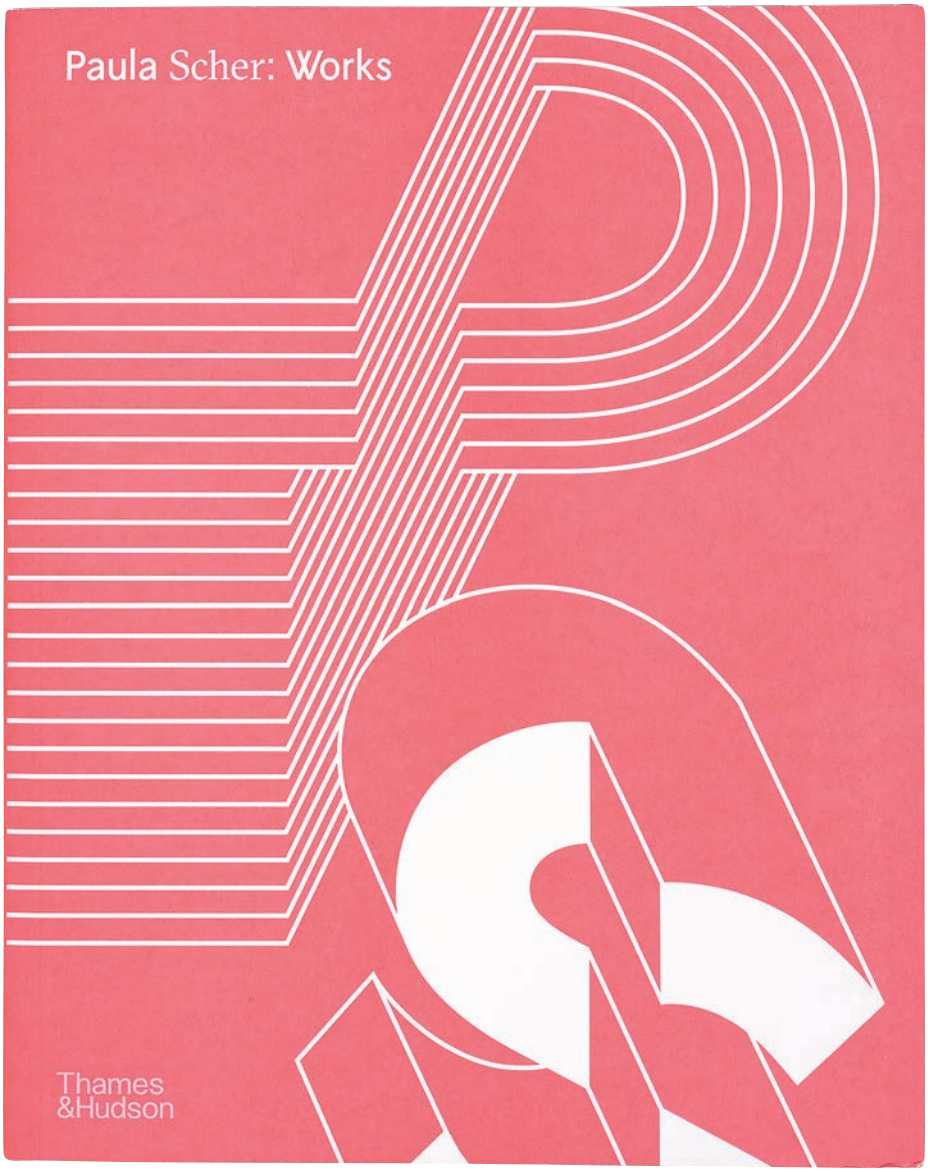
Finally, to truly understand the significance of the collection's temporal scope, it is perhaps worth pausing on the peculiarity of print history in the Americas. While the advent of print in Europe occurred during the mid-fifteenth century—with the first press arriving in the Americas in Mexico City by 1539—its reach into the Spanish Empire's broader colonial territories was uneven, and slow. In the viceregal territories constituting present-day Colombia, print arrived particularly late. While the first printing press reached Cartagena in 1738, Bogotá's first press was not established until 1778, where it remained limited in both scope and output well into the republican period. As a result, the nineteenth century occupies a place in Colombian print history that has no precise equivalent in the European tradition; it is the period in which print culture truly took root, when locally produced books, pamphlets, and periodicals began to circulate more widely, and in doing so, to shape public life.

Thus, in the context of Colombian history, the materials represented in the Malcolm Deas Collection are not simply old books: they are *early* books, carrying the same foundational significance that early printed European books hold for the history of the Western world.

The research value of this collection extends across disciplines. For Latin American historians, literary scholars, and bibliographers alike, these books function as multiplicative resources, bridging Colombian national history with the broader fields of political science, postcolonial studies, book history, and beyond. For the everyday reader, they offer something rarer still: the ability to easily immerse oneself in the documentary worlds of one of South America's most vibrant nations, and to encounter, firsthand, the voices through which it came into being.

Camila Walls Castillo
TALint Intern
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

New to the Reference Collections at the Fisher Library



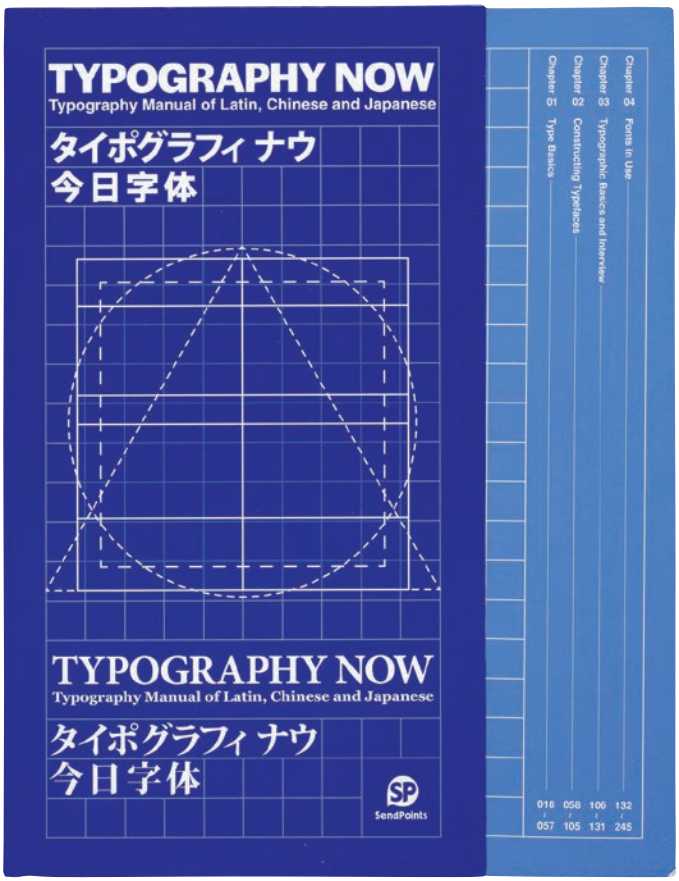
On a first visit to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, many people find themselves drawn to the shelves on the ground floor near our reference and reading room service desks. These books make up our reference collection, which provides quick access to bibliographies, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reference sources relevant to the collections and to work performed in the library, such as cataloguing early books and identifying bindings and prints. Library staff are in the process of selecting new reference material to meet the research and reference needs of our readers today and to better represent the many members of our community.

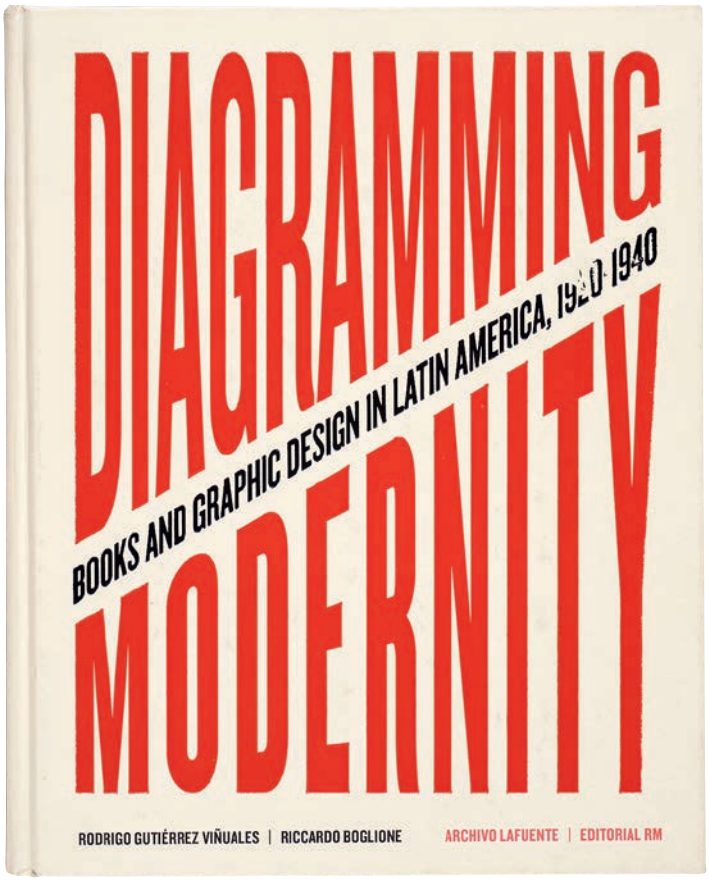
The nature of reference work has changed dramatically since the library opened in 1973 and the first books were placed on these shelves. Certain types of books such as encyclopaedias and lists of 'Who's Who' (a prolific series of reference works listing biographies of notable people in particular fields or places) have been largely supplanted by online resources. Other reference books reflect past priorities and areas of study that have decreased in popularity, or reflect a particular heteronormative, patriarchal, or ethnocentric worldview. Some reference works also become valuable and rare and are no longer appropriate for open browsing. This is why the library continues to assess the reference collection and to update it to meet current needs and priorities, and to reflect current fields of study. Our space, while beautiful, can also be intimidating to a first-time visitor, and this work is part of a larger effort to make our space more inviting and inclusive. Over the last two summers, staff have spent time contemplating what volumes in our reference collection are underused and could be moved to the regular collection to make room for more in-demand titles.

Working with New York based design studio and archive centre Letra Muerta, the library has acquired what has been termed the 'Decentralizing Narratives' collection and its additional subsections 'Women Designers', 'Decentralizing Design', and 'Protest Graphics'. Letra Muerta began as a publishing house in Venezuela in 2014 before moving to New York City. Their main function is 'as a hybrid studio for design, historical preservation, workshops, and collection development'.[1] The inclusion of these volumes seeks to reimagine the design canon, particularly around typography and graphic design, and to include the work and perspectives of underrepresented groups and types of design.

Some of the items in the collection are already popular in classes and in the reading room, and well represent the 'Decentralizing Narratives' collection. *Diagramming Modernity: Books and Graphic Design in Latin America, 1920-1940* (2023) by Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales and Riccardo Boglione highlights over one thousand illustrated first editions from this period, exploring the ways in which design and typography transformed during a period of modernization in the region. *Typography Now: Typography*

FACING PAGE: *Paula Scher: Works* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2024). **BELOW:** *Typography **N**ow* (Hong Kong: Sendpoints Publishing Co., 2020). *Diagramming Modernity: Books and Graphic Design in Latin America, 1920-1940* (Heras, Cantabria, Spain: Archivo Lafuente; Heras, Cantabria, Spain: Editiones la Bahía; Barcelona: Editorial RM, 2023)


TYPOGRAPHY NOW
Typography Manual of Latin, Chinese and Japanese
タイポグラフィ ナウ
今日字体
SendPoints
Chapter 01 Type Basics 016 057
Chapter 02 Constructing Typefaces 058 105
Chapter 03 Typographic Basics and Interview 106 131
Chapter 04 Fonts in Use 132 245


DIAGRAMMING
BOOKS AND GRAPHIC DESIGN IN LATIN AMERICA, 1920-1940
MODERNITY
RODRIGO GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES | RICCARDO BOGLIONE
ARCHIVO LAFUENTE | EDITORIAL RM

Manual of Latin, Chinese, and Japanese (2020) introduces the reader to typefaces, foundries, principles of design, and how to incorporate mixed scripts in an increasingly interrelated world. Works on textile artist Sheila Hicks (*Weaving as Metaphor* by Arthur C. Danto and Joan Simon, published in 2021) and graphic designer and painter Paula Scher (*Paula Scher: Works*, published in 2024) have also proven popular, and are excellent examples of the kinds of items in the 'Women Designers' portion of the collection.

Many works in the 'Decentralizing Narratives' collection are the only copies available on campus. These titles also provide fresh perspectives and are a welcome complement to our classic reference sources. As these items are in the only section of the library available for open browsing, we hope that our readers continue to pull these books off the shelves and to get inspired by their fresh perspectives and research potential.

Andrew Stewart
Reading Room Coordinator
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

ENDNOTES

1 "About Letra Muerta Inc.", Letra Muerta, accessed April 21, 2026. https://letramuerta.nyc/about/.

6

New in Rare Books

Over the past twelve months, librarians and archivists in Rare Books and Special Collections placed four hundred and thirty orders corresponding to the purchase of over five thousand new items for the collections—ranging from manuscripts to early printed books, pamphlets, ephemera, posters, prints, newspapers, magazines, and contemporary independent and small press publications. As new rare books arrive almost daily to the library, members of the team carry out regular tasks involved in making recently purchased material available for consultation in the reading room—including pasting institutional or donor's bookplates, making boxes or enclosures, adding flyers with call numbers—before each item or collection finally gets a bibliographic record in the online library catalogue. This selection of twenty-two new rare books represents the main areas of collecting and offers a glimpse into potential research, teaching, and learning in the Fisher Library.

HISTOIRE
DE LA NOVVELLE
FRANCE

1

LES MVSES
DE LA NOVVELLE
FRANCE.
A MONSEIGNEVR
LE CHANCELLIER.

2

POEMS,
AND
FANCIES:
WRITTEN
By the RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE LADY
NEWCASTLE.

3

4

CANADIAN STUDIES • Two important books by Marc Lescarbot (1570–1641) joined the early printed holdings on Canadian history, including the first edition of Lescarbot's history of New France, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (Jean Millot, 1609) (1), recounting both the earliest French voyages and his own firsthand experience at Port Royal, and knowledge gathered from eyewitnesses of early settlements in Acadia. Often bound with his *Histoire*, but issued separately, a copy of *Les muses de la Nouvelle France* (Jean Millot, 1609) (2) is also new to the collections. This important work contains Lescarbot's poetry and the 'Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France', a theatrical spectacle performed 'on the waves' in the harbour of Port Royal in 1606, often described as the first Western play written and performed in North America.

ENGLISH LITERATURE • The first edition of the earliest collection of poems by Margaret Cavendish (1623–1673), *Poems and Fancies* (London, 1653) (3), was recently added to the collections. The volume consists of poems on natural philosophy and other subjects by this influential and original writer.

HISTORY OF SCIENCE • A Manuscript of Original Watercolour Illustrations of Shells (England, 1828) (4) was selected to support natural history research, particularly unpublished works by women naturalists in the nineteenth century. The album preserves a selection of over five hundred drawings of 'shells from nature', including species from England and around the globe.

HISTORY OF MEDICINE • The first edition of *Théorie de monde et des étres organisés* (Paris, 1784) (5) by Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) is the most recent addition of writings on mesmerism or animal magnetism, which supports studies into the development of modern hypnosis and early forms of psychotherapy.

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY • Two important eighteenth-century books were selected for these collections. The first book, *Afbeeldingen der Merkwaardigste Geschiedenissen van het Oude en Nieuwe Testament* (Amsterdam, 1729) (6), is the second edition of a monumental commentary and illustrations on the Old and New Testaments by Jan Luyken (1649–1712). The second book, *Vernünfftige Gedancken* (Halle, 1713), (7) is the scarce first edition of an early work on logic in German by Christian von Wolff (1679–1754), an influential philosopher of the German Enlightenment.

CLASSICAL AND EUROPEAN LITERATURE • The library ordered the *editio princeps* of *Vita et gesta Karoli Magni* (Cologne, 1521) (8), the most important medieval account of the life of Charlemagne, the first Holy Roman Emperor; and a copy of *Liber trium virorum & trium spiritualium virginum* (Paris, 1513) (9), consisting of

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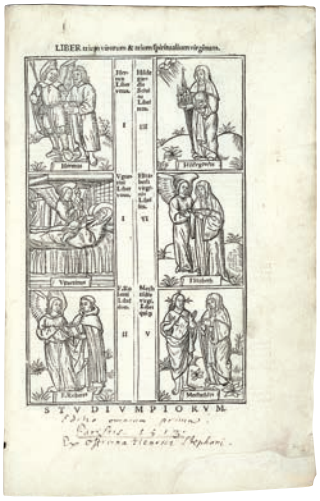

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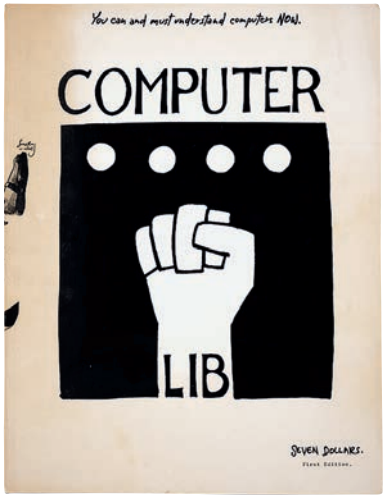

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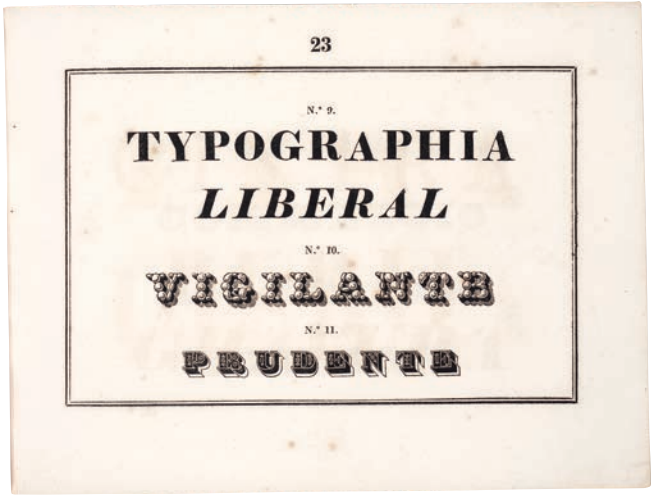

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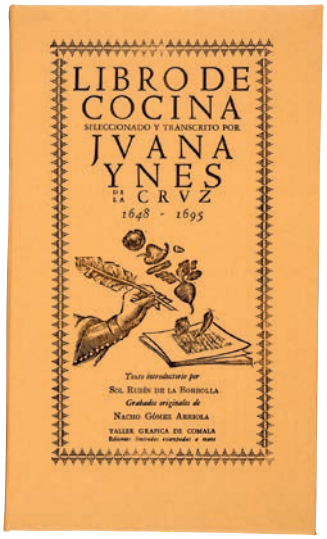

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JUANA INES DE LA CRUZ
1648 - 1695
UNA MUJER PENSANTE ANTE EL PATRIARCADO
Algunas reflexiones y un poema
TALLER GRAFICA DE COMALA

14

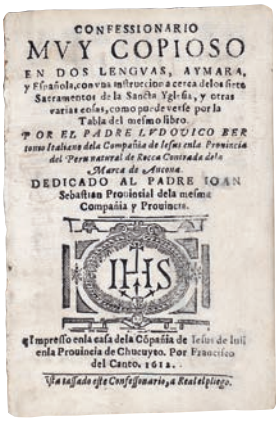
15

16

17

VOCABVLARIO
DE LA LENGVA
AYMARA.
PRIMERA PARTE, DONDE POR ABE-
cedario se ponen en primer lugar los Vocablos de la lengua
Española para buscar en ellos los correspondientes
en la lengua Aymara.
COMPVESTO POR EL P. LVDOVICO
DEDICADO AL ILLVSTRISSIMO
DEDITE IN LVCEM
IHS
Impresso en la casa de la Compañia de Iesus de la Prouincia
Prouincia de Chucuyto. Por Francisco del Canto. 1612.

18


CONFESSIONARIO
MVY COPIOSO
EN DOS LENGVAS, AYMARA,
y Española, con vna instruccion acerca de los siete
Sacramentos de la Santa Yglesia, y otras
varias cosas, como puede verse por la
Tabla del mesmo libro.
POR EL PADRE LVDOVICO BER
tonio Italiano de la Compañia de Iesus en la Prouincia
del Piru natural de Rocca Contrada de la
Marca de Ancona.
DEDICADO AL PADRE IOAN
Sebastian Prouincial de la mesma
Compañia y Prouincia.
IHS
Impresso en la casa de la Cõpañia de Iesus de la
en la Prouincia de Chucuyto. Por Francisco
del Canto. 1612.

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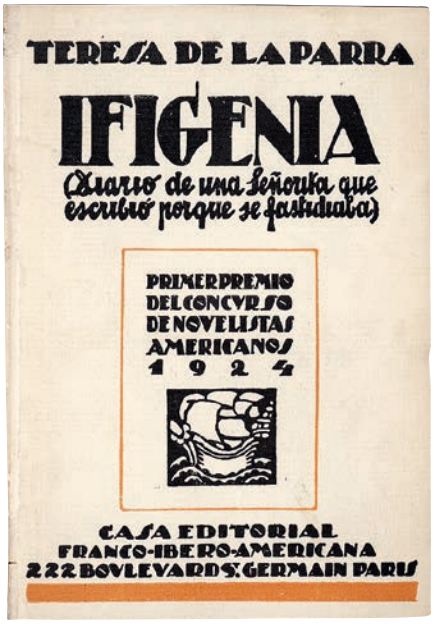

TERESA DE LA PARRA
IFIGENIA
(Diario de una señorita que escribió porque se fastidiaba)
PRIMER PREMIO DEL CONCURSO DE NOVELISTAS AMERICANOS 1924
CASA EDITORIAL FRANCO-IBERO-AMERICANA
222 BOULEVARD ST. GERMAIN PARIS

21

22

important works of medieval Christian mysticism, including the *Scivias* of Hildegard of Bingen, the *Visiones* of Elisabeth of Schönau, and the *Liber specialis gratiae* of Mechthild of Hackeborn.

HISTORY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS • Two modern books, a guide and a manifesto, were selected for these general collections. *Paris after Dark* (Paris, 1867) (10) offers valuable information into the history of sex work and the politics/economics of 'many curious scenes and places of nightly resort' in Paris in the nineteenth century. In *Computer Lib/ Dream Machines* (1974) (11), Theodor H. Nelson presents a 'countercultural manifesto of the early personal computing movement' designed as a zine/ technical manual in the style of underground publications of the 1960s and 1970s.

BOOK HISTORY, PRINT CULTURES, AND BOOK ARTS • The first type specimen book issued by the Imprenta Nacional in Portugal is a notable addition to the collections. *Provas dos diversos typos, vinhetas e ornatos typographicos da Imprensa Nacional* (Lisboa, 1838) (12) documents the growth of the typographical industry in Portugal from 1768 until the publication of this important type specimen book. New artists' books and small press publications, like *Libro de cocina* (Guadalajara, 2024) (13) and *Algunas reflexiones y un poema* (Guadalajara, 2024) (14), are great examples of recent selections in the book arts. Both publications reproduce recipes and poetry by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695), one of the greatest intellects in colonial Latin America, in the typical letterpress and woodcut productions of the Taller Gráfica de Comala in Mexico. Another special addition this year is a new French–style design binding by Robert Wu for an edition of *Ruth & Booz* (1930) (15) by François L. Schmied, bound in black French leather and '*Tisse*' woven onlays invented by the artist.

CULINARY AND COOKBOOKS • A foundational African American cookbook by Abby Fisher (b. 1831) expands our historical resources. *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking* (San Francisco, 1881) (16) is the second cookbook published in the United States by a Black woman. Born into slavery, Abby Fisher later moved to San Francisco after the Civil War, where she became a successful caterer.

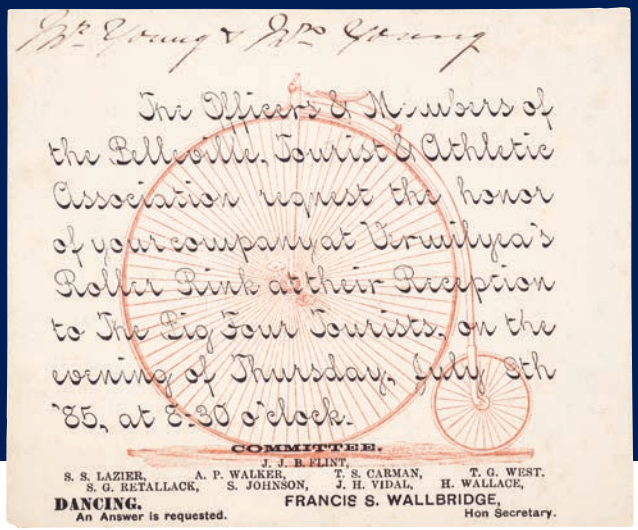
JEWISH STUDIES • For this area, an early diorama (or peepshow) was selected as a rare survival of this genre. *Temple des Juifs/ Juden-Synagoge* (Augsburg, 1730s) (17) consists of five hand-coloured leaves of engravings depicting three-dimensional scenes inside a Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam.

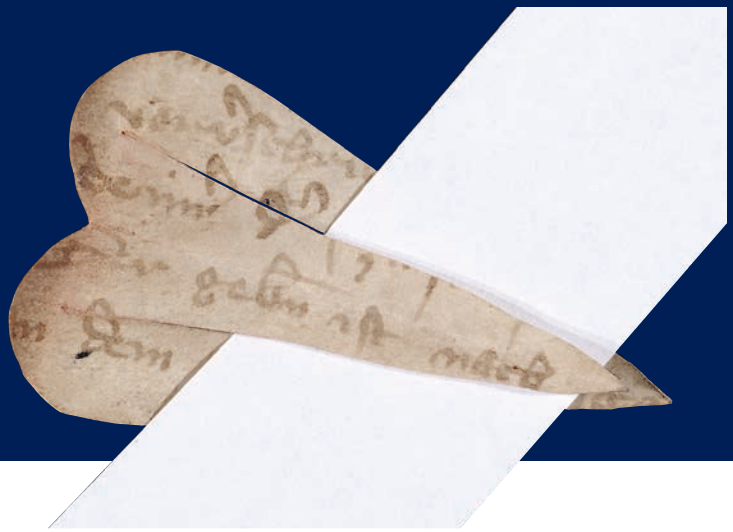
LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES • The library added two rare early printed books in Aymara from the seventeenth century. *Vocabulario de la lengua Aymara* (Juli, 1612) (18) and *Confessionario muy copioso en dos lenguas, aymara y española* (Juli, 1612) (19) are remarkable survivals of Jesuit missionary printing in Juli, Peru and significant additions to the growing collections of early printed material in Indigenous languages from the Americas. In 1924, Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957) and Teresa de la Parra (1889–1926) published two influential works by women writers: Mistral's *Lecturas para mujeres destinadas a la enseñanza del lenguaje* (Mexico, 1924) (20) and Parra's *Ifigenia: Diario de una señorita que escribió porque se fastidiaba* (Paris, 1924) (21) are now part of the collections on literatures from Latin America.

MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES • An early illuminated manuscript of *Dīvān-i Jāmī* (Iran, 1590) (22) joined our collections in this area. Copied by the calligrapher Muḥammad ibn Mullā Mīr (al-Ḥusaynī al-Ustādī), the manuscript contains ghazals, qaṣīdas, and quatrains, along with five illuminated miniatures.

VISIT US • Join us in the reading room where you can access these twenty-two new rare books and many more items and collections already available for research, teaching, and learning.

David Fernández
Head, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library


The Officers & Members of
the Belleville Tourist & Athletic
Association request the honor
of your company at Versailles's
Roller Rink at their Reception
to The Big Four Tourists, on the
evening of Thursday, July 9th
'85, at 8:30 o'clock.
COMMITTEE.
J. J. B. FLINT,
S. S. LAZIER, A. P. WALKER, T. S. CARMAN, T. G. WEST.
S. G. RETALLACK, S. JOHNSON, J. H. VIDAL, H. WALLACE,
DANCING.
An Answer is requested.
FRANCIS S. WALLBRIDGE,
Hon Secretary.



(Re)Arranging the Ephemeral: Access, Order, and Discovery

This March, I had the opportunity to present to my peers and colleagues at U of T's Book History and Print Culture Colloquium my current project at the Fisher Library. The annual colloquium features research and projects from both graduate students and the local book history and print community. My presentation was on updating and organizing the Fisher Ephemera Collection, including interfiling two recent donations as well as some purchased material. I was excited to share my fascination with ephemera and to speak about my process in organizing a collection actively in use. More information on the new donations added to the collection will be in a future edition of *The Halcyon*, but for now I would like to re-introduce readers to the newly reorganized Ephemera Collection.

The word ephemera comes from the Greek *epi*, meaning about or around, and *hemera*, meaning a day. The Ephemera Society of America defines ephemera as 'a broad range of minor (and sometimes major) everyday documents intended for one-time or short-term use'. However, in the practical context of cataloguing, ephemera is often defined by what it is *not* rather than what it is. The Fisher Ephemera Collection originated as an assortment of miscellaneous items from both the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections and the University of Toronto Archives.

Organizing ephemera is a flexible and intuitive process. There are no standard arrangement practices; the collection is organized based on users' needs and the library's collecting priorities as well as space constraints. The categories at Fisher are an enigmatic mix of Library of Congress subject headings, formats, and genres amalgamated from the past fifty years of additions to the collection by multiple staff members. Some examples of categories include Domestic Advice, Funeral Rites and Ceremonies, Insurance, Paper Money, Ribbons, Telegraphs, and, my personal favourite, Unidentified Flying Objects.

Placing an item in a category can feel like solving a puzzle by using clues found within the item. The main obstacle I encountered is format vs subject: do I put an invitation from an athletic association to a cycling event in Invitations or Sports? Do I put a Christmas card from a military base during World War II in Greeting Cards or World War II? I always ask myself what would be most beneficial to the user. So, someone who is interested in the history of cycling is more likely to request the box for Sports rather than Invitations. Subject categories also frequently overlap. A brochure from a hotel in the Bahamas could be filed under Travel or Accommodations. Some categories are the result of a specific donation of related materials, such as the UFO box or the box of eighteenth-century Portuguese ephemera.

It is difficult to summarize the contents of such a wide and varied collection in a few words. The largest category by far is Greeting Cards for every holiday and occasion imaginable, from the nineteenth century to today. Other strengths include Toronto history, World War II, and printing and publishing history. The oldest item I have come across is a planchette bookmark made from a manuscript fragment, but there are also programs from events that took place just a few years ago, making the collection span centuries.

Aside from its wide range of applications in research as primary sources, ephemera can also serve as a source of inspiration. As a scrapbooker myself, I am delighted by many of the items I have come across. I have made it through around one hundred and twenty boxes of the collection, with around thirty more left to organize and interfile. All folders are now numbered with box and folder number, and the updated finding aids will be available by the end of summer. My goal for this project has been to increase the usability and findability of materials within the collections, while also maintaining the organization system that is familiar to patrons. I hope it leads to more people discovering the value and versatility of ephemera.

Sophia Arts
Graduate Student Library Assistant
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

2025–2026 Friends of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

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Names of deceased donors appear in italics. We thank all members who wish to remain anonymous.

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Thank you to all Friends of the Fisher Library donors for your generous support.

We are deeply grateful for every gift and for the community of supporters who help sustain our work. Any donation amount welcomes you as a Friend and includes many benefits. Beginning with next spring's issue of *Halcyon*, this donor recognition listing will include supporters who contribute $200 or more annually.

Book Science Workshop, Fall 2025

In November 2025, the Fisher Library hosted a hands-on, public Book Science workshop which I had the pleasure of leading. Participants were introduced to basic concepts of Book Science, including ongoing projects in the field and current work at the University of Toronto. This workshop focused on the use of the electromagnetic spectrum, in particular the near infrared (NIR) and ultraviolet (UV) wavelengths, to discern ink and pigment characteristics. In general, carbon, iron, and vegetal inks look different under different wavelengths.

Attendees utilized a Dino-lite microscope, which allows users to view areas of interest in both UV and IR light. Sent on a scavenger hunt for evidence of construction, repair, use, and ownership in the library's teaching collection, group members used the Dino-lite to locate and categorize stains, splats, inks, pigments, and erasures. In addition, guests were able to see the library's multi-spectral imaging machine (MISHA) in action. MISHA also makes use of the electromagnetic spectrum, but with a larger light range and field of analysis. By running the machine, participants were able to reveal the underpaintings of an entire page and other details of its construction. The Fisher Library plans to host more Book Science workshops like this one and to demonstrate other techniques in the future.

Rachel Di Cresce
Special Collections Librarian
for Book Science
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

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Join us in supporting the Fisher Library by visiting **fisher.library.utoronto.ca/donations/friends.**

Your contributions will help fund acquisitions and community engagement initiatives, while providing you exclusive access to special publications, lectures, exhibitions, and other events.

Encounters with Science and Medicine at the Fisher Library

As part of the Fisher's continuing commitment to community and educational programming, the library held an evening workshop, 'Introduction to Scientific Illustration' in October 2025. Approximately thirty workshop participants were introduced to a range of different illustration methods used to represent some of the most important early scientific discoveries. Through hands-on interaction with examples pulled from our extensive medical and scientific collections, workshop attendees learned how to identify early printing techniques, from woodblock printing to nature printing to lithography.

The workshop included a display of ten books that traced the development of printing techniques in the fields of anatomy, botany, and astronomy. It began with a copy of *Fasciculus medicinae* (1522), one of the earliest anatomical texts at the Fisher Library. The simple, iconographic illustrations demonstrated some of the limitations of early woodblock printing, while the text discussed early European medical knowledge. The celebrated anatomical work by Andreas Vesalius (1515–1564), *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), served as an example of highly skilled woodblock printing that marked a technical and stylistic shift towards more accuracy in medical illustration. In the field of botany, workshop participants examined an example of an Early Modern herbal: a book containing descriptions, illustrations, and properties of plants, focusing on their medicinal, culinary, and magical uses. The herbal on display was a volume frequently used in teaching at the Fisher Library: a commentary on Dioscorides by Pietro Andrea Mattioli (1501–1577), published in Venice in 1565, alongside an original woodblock used in the production of the book. Examining the original pearwood block, featuring an illustration of the chicory root, allowed participants to consider the broader material culture of scientific book production.

Perhaps the most unusual technique discussed was nature printing, a method that uses ink and real objects like leaves, flowers, or other specimens to create impressions on paper. The library recently acquired an example of German nature printing by Johann Michael Seligmann (1720–1762) published in 1748, the title of which translates loosely to *The Nutrient Vessels in the Leaves of Trees, According to Their Different Distribution and Arrangement as Formed by Nature.* The book focuses on the structure of leaves, including their delicate vascular systems, which are represented most accurately with the nature printing method.

For the history of astronomy, workshop attendees viewed an important work of selenography, the *Mappa selenographica* by Wilhelm Beer (1797–1850) and Johann Heinrich Mädler (1794–1874), published in 1834. The most complete map of the moon of its time, the *Mappa* was produced by lithography and includes some of the first accurate measurements of the moon's craters, mountains, and plains. These illustrations demonstrate how lithography, a planographic (or flat) printing technique, allowed for extremely detailed and accurate depictions of scientific measurements.

Together, these materials offered participants a tangible understanding of how advances in illustration techniques not only shaped the visual language of science but transformed the ways knowledge was recorded, interpreted, and shared across disciplines.

Alexandra K. Carter
Science and Medicine Librarian
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

ABOVE: The woodcut of a chicory plant that appears in Mattioli's sixteenth-century herbal. Image from Andreas Vesalius' *De humani corpori fabrica* (1543).

EDITORS' NOTE

The Halcyon: The Newsletter of the Friends of The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library is published twice a year in June and December. *The Halcyon* includes short articles on recent noteworthy gifts to and acquisitions of the library, recent or current exhibitions in the library, activities of the Friends, and other short articles about the library's collections.

This issue of *The Halcyon* was edited by Liz Ridolfo, David Fernández, Loryl MacDonald, John Shoesmith, and Maureen Morin, and designed by Maureen Morin.

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Photography: Paul Armstrong, Megan Belisle, David Fernández, Grant Hurley, Maureen Morin, Liz Ridolfo, John Shoesmith, and Paul Terefenko.

THE HALCYON

University of Toronto Libraries
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A5

Exhibitions & Events 2026

EXHIBITIONS

9–5, Monday–Friday, year round
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
120 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario
Before visiting, please check our website to confirm hours of opening.

19 May to 14 August
Popular Culture in Early Modern English Household Print, 1660-180
Some things do not change much over time, namely the kinds of books people read and keep as reference sources at home. This exhibition showcases materials from the three best-selling genres of later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English print: household manuals, religious works, and light entertainment. The first encompassed practical guides from almanacs to cookbooks and gardening texts. The second consisted of devotional and didactic literature. The third comprehended a motley assortment of publications ranging from pamphlet novellas to sensational news and the latest theatrical songs. This is some of the first affordable print telling English people how to live their everyday lives.

This exhibition is curated by Professor Jennifer Mori, Department of History.

9 July and 13 August • 5 pm
Summer tours: Popular Culture in Early Modern English Household Print, 1660-180
Drop in for a special guided tour of this exhibition, led by curator Professor Jennifer Mori. All are welcome.

8 September to 23 December
***Aere Perennius*: The Classical Traditions of Homer, Cicero, Plutarch, and Apuleius**

EVENTS

17–18 September
Fisher Summer Seminar: Independent Publishing with Eric Schierloh
Participants will share knowledge and engage with practical tools that foster the emergence of new and diverse editorial actors, while also addressing challenges involved in launching and sustaining small-scale, self-managed publishing projects.

Since 2017, the Fisher Summer Seminar series has provided continuing education in the fields of book history and bibliography for librarians, archivists, curators, scholars, antiquarian booksellers, students, and the public.

An application form will be available on the Fisher website. Applications deadline: 31 July 2026.

Saturday 19 September • 10 am–5 pm
Small and Fine Press Fair

MORE EVENTS TO BE ANNOUNCED

Events, Friends of Fisher Lectures, Open Houses, Seminars, and Workshops
Please visit the News & Events section of our website and our social media channels for information.

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Summer Closure! Please note that the Fisher Library will be closed Monday 17 August–Monday 7 September. Regular hours resume Tuesday 8 September.